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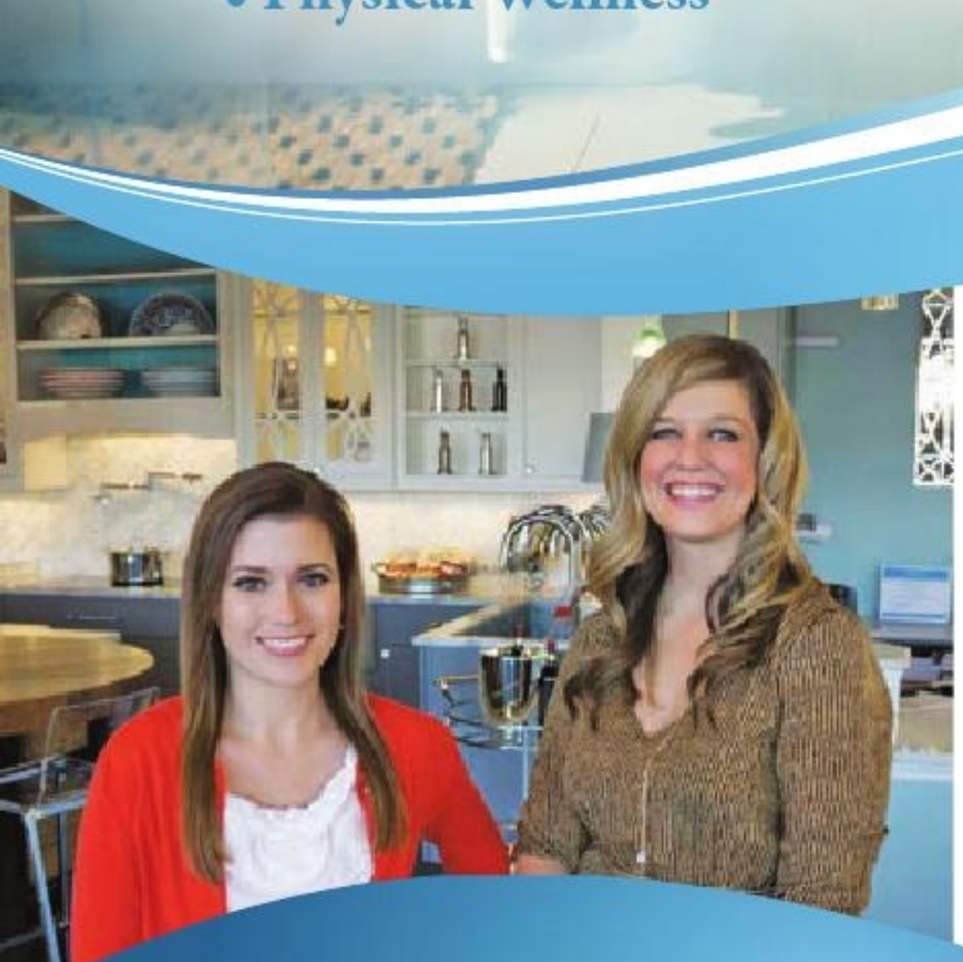

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This coastal farmhouse design features an open floor plan with study, dining room, gourmet kitchen/family room and 1st floor master. Upstairs are 4 bedrooms plus a large den and a huge walk-in floored attic. **$749,000**

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This stately brick residence overlooks beautiful Lake Nona and the Tom Fazio designed Porter's Neck golf course. A sunny disposition is a certainty with vaulted ceilings and floor to ceiling glass with water and golf views from nearly every room. **$849,000**

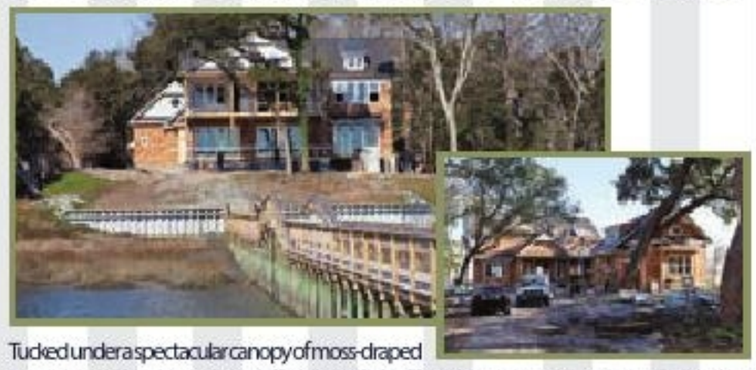
6422 Westport · Shandy

This low country inspired residence is perfectly sited under stately oaks with Intracoastal Waterway views and a 30 ft. boat slip. Over 6,200 sq. ft. of quality appointments, elegant moldings and hardwood floors provide a comfortable family home. **$1,395,000**

24 Osprey Drive · North Topsail

Ocean and sound views are prevalent in this North Topsail coastal cottage designed by Wilmington architect, David Lisle. This reverse floor plan features 7 bedrooms, including 3 master suites on one of the four levels. **$889,000**

2309 Middle Sound Loop Road · Middle Sound



Tucked under a spectacular canopy of moss-draped live oaks and hardwood, this NEW CONSTRUCTION home has views that will take your breath away. The bulk-headed, high bluff lot with private pier offers spectacular ICW views over Middle Sound, Figure 8, Mason's Inlet and Wrightsville Beach. **$2,850,000**

5908 Greenville Loop Road · Greenville Loop

"Lloyds Landing" a 4.5 acre waterfront tract with private pier overlooking Hewlwtt's Creek. Adorable 100-year-old cottage (sold as-is). Property zoned R-20, this property could be the site of a very private residence or a developer's 7or 8 lot neighborhood. **$1,549,000**

1024 Arboretum Drive · Landfall

This warm inviting brick home in the heart of Landfall has 4,000 sq. ft., 4 bedrooms, 3.5 baths. Completely updated with new roof, new kitchen, granite countertops and tile backsplash as well as landscaping. **$599,000**

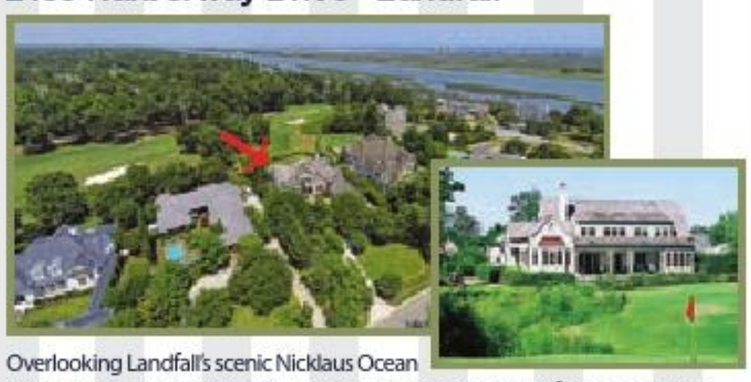
801 Shell Point Place · Landfall

Situated on a 30 ft. high bluff overlooking the tranquil tidal waters of Howe Creek, this quality built home by master craftsmen, Fred Murray, takes full advantage of the site. An open floor plan combined with oversized floor to ceiling windows bring the outdoor inside! **$1,195,000**

804 Swift Wind Place · Landfall

Sunny brick custom home features 4 bedrooms, 3.4 baths, vaulted ceiling great room with elliptical windows, granite/stainless kitchen and the perfect 3-sided screened porch overlooking a fenced back yard loaded with hardwoods, azaleas, hydrangeas and perennial summer color. **$769,000**

2135 Harborway Drive · Landfall



Overlooking Landfall's scenic Nicklaus Ocean #2, this quality built all brick French Country inspired design features an open floor plan with 2 bedrooms on the 1st floor, including a spacious master. Loads of built-ins walk-in attic, covered porch and pool. **$1,199,900**

600 Inverary Way · Landfall

One acre estate home site in Landfall's Highland neighborhood. Located at the end of a cul-de-sac, this wooded home site overlooks three holes on the Jack Nicklaus Marsh Course (#5, 6 & 7) and the waterfowl of Pembroke Jones Lake. **$574,000**

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1351 Regatta Drive — *Landfall*

Charming 1-year-old, custom built home overlooking the 9th Fairway of Landfall's famed Pete Dye course & ICWW. From the floor to light fixtures, no expense was spared in the quality of construction and finishes in this professional interior designer's personal home. As you enter, you are greeted by 10 ft. ceilings throughout the 1st floor, an open and flowing floorplan, wide plank oiled antique French oak floors throughout all living areas, and expansive views of the golf course and the ICWW from all bedrooms, great room, dining room and covered porches on each level. The kitchen is a chef's delight, and boasts custom cabinets, Thermador appliances including gas range, built in wall oven, microwave, and refrigerator, granite counter tops and tile backsplash and custom oak island with breakfast bar. Around the corner you will find a cozy family room/study and half bath. On the other side of the 1st floor is the luxurious master suite offering custom cabinets with raised marble counters, oversized tile shower, his and hers huge walk-in closets with custom closet systems. Upstairs boasts a sitting room, 2 bedrooms each with private tiled baths, a walk in attic and unfinished FROG that has over 850 sq.ft. that is insulated and set up for a separate HVAC. This immaculate property is move-in ready and offers low maintenance living, all brick exterior and yard that is maintained by HOA. **$799,900**

1726 Fairway Drive — *Country Club Terrace*

Classic South Oleander home in one of Wilmington's most desirable, established neighborhoods. This house sits towards the end of a tree lined, cul-de-sac and backs up to the 11th fairway of Cape Fear Country Club's golf course. Offers hardwood floors throughout both levels, a formal living room with masonry fireplace, formal dining room, a study with antique heart of pine paneling, and a large family room with wainscoting and a bay window overlooking the sloping back yard and golf course. It is within walking distance of Cape Fear Country Club and is close to New Hanover Regional Medical Center, downtown, and shopping. **$499,900**

5032 Nicholas Creek Circle — *MasonboroForest*

This spacious home is in the heart of sought after Masonboro Forest. Enter through its soaring two story foyer and on to the great room which boasts custom built-in bookcases and television cabinet above the gas fire place and a cathedral ceiling. The kitchen offers granite countertops, stainless steel appliances, lovely cherry stained cabinets, and breakfast bar. A separate breakfast area leads to a deck and a large screened porch overlooking the secluded back yard. This home also offers hardwood floors throughout both levels, four bedrooms, four full baths, and a huge FROG. Substantial first floor master bedroom has a tray ceiling, large walk-in closet, full tile bath with double vanities, separate shower and whirlpool tub. Home office/study on the first floor could be a fifth bedroom and has an adjoining full bath. The neighborhood offers a sizeable clubhouse, pool, and tennis courts and is centrally located. **$429,000**

1542 Magnolia Place — *Magnolia Place/Oleander*

This home sits at the end of an oak lined quiet cul-de-sac with side yard overlooking the 10th fairway of Cape Fear Country Club's golf course. This 3 bedroom, 3 bath home offers all formal areas plus sunroom, a cozy den and breakfast room, and a separate children's suite upstairs with bedroom, full bath and huge playroom. It is within walking distance within Cape Fear Country Club and is close to New Hanover Regional Medical Center, downtown, and shopping and dining. **$399,000**

8422 Emerald Dunes Road — *Porter's Neck Plantation*

Immaculately maintained, move in ready home located in Porter's Neck Plantation. This 3 bedroom, 2 bath home offers hardwood floors throughout all living areas and 10 foot ceilings throughout the entire home. The large master suite is complete with sitting area, spacious bathroom with raised height counter tops, dual vanities, frameless shower and separate bathtub. The kitchen features custom cherry cabinets, granite countertops, and new stainless appliances and a breakfast nook with bay window. The great room has gas logs and custom built-ins. Enjoy the glassed in sunroom for year round use which is not included in heated square footage and a patio. Yard is maintained by HOA for low maintenance living. The gated community of Porter's Neck offers picnic area, day dock, and boat ramp on ICWW and is just minutes to shopping, dining and the beach . **$379,900**

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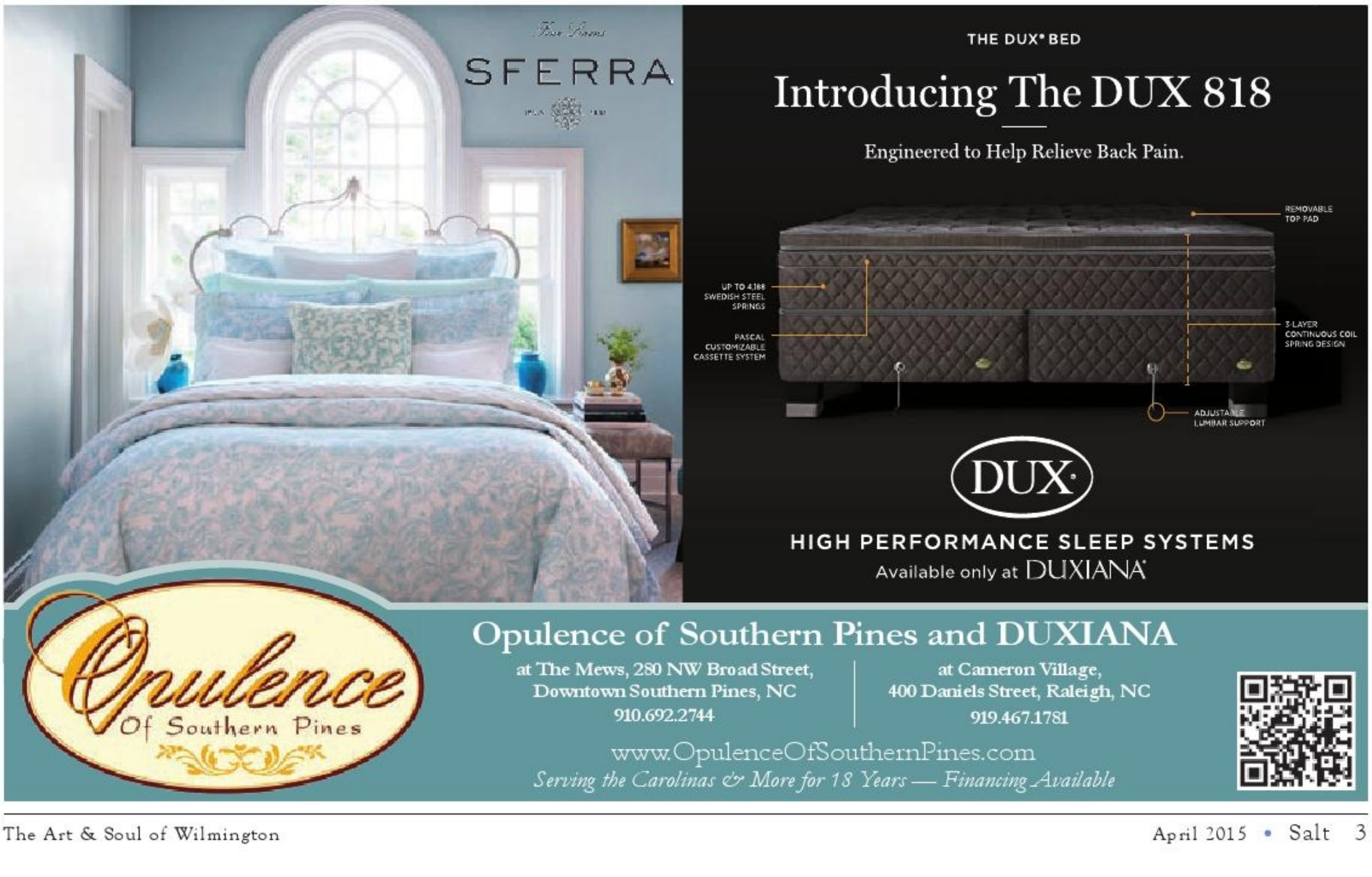
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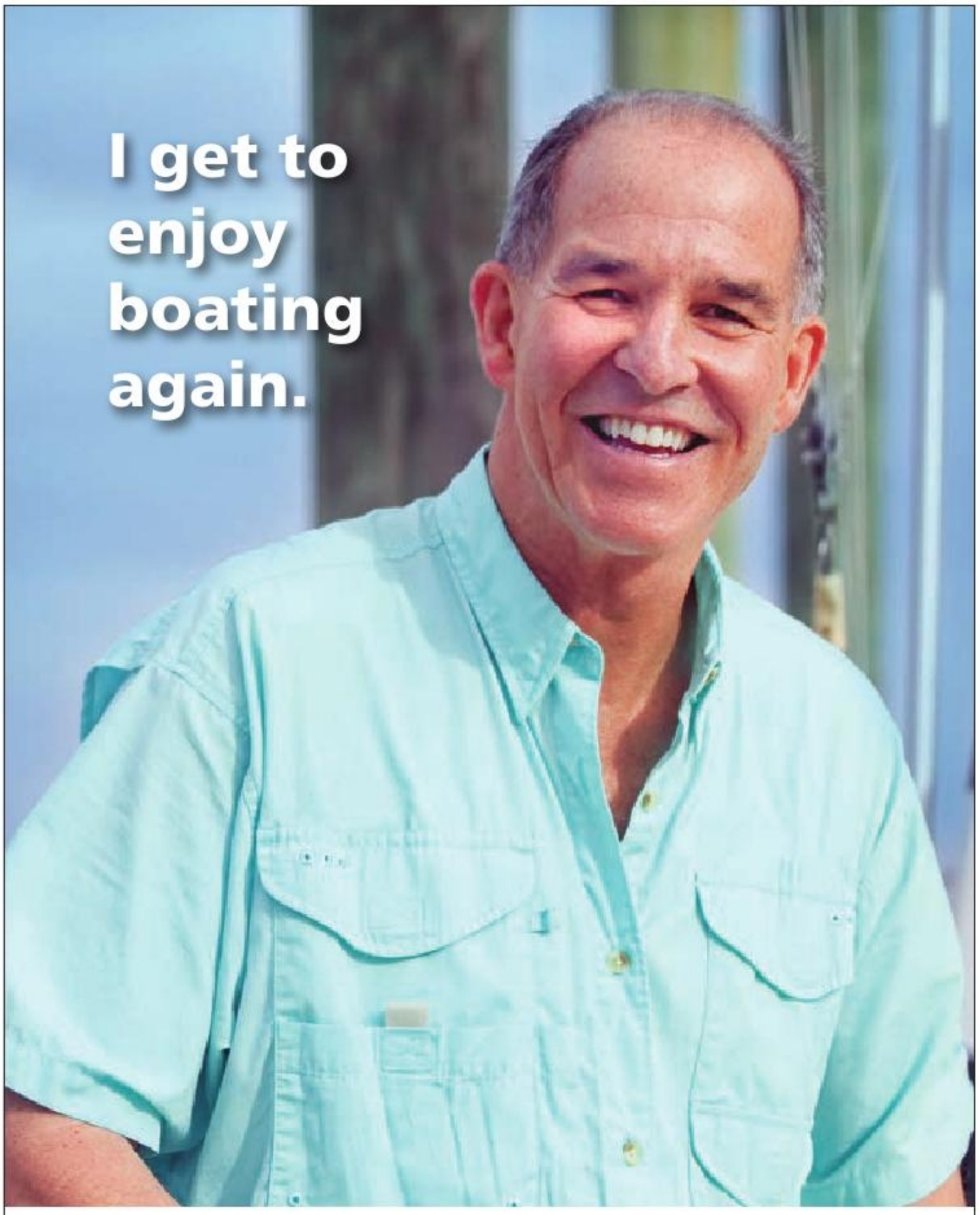

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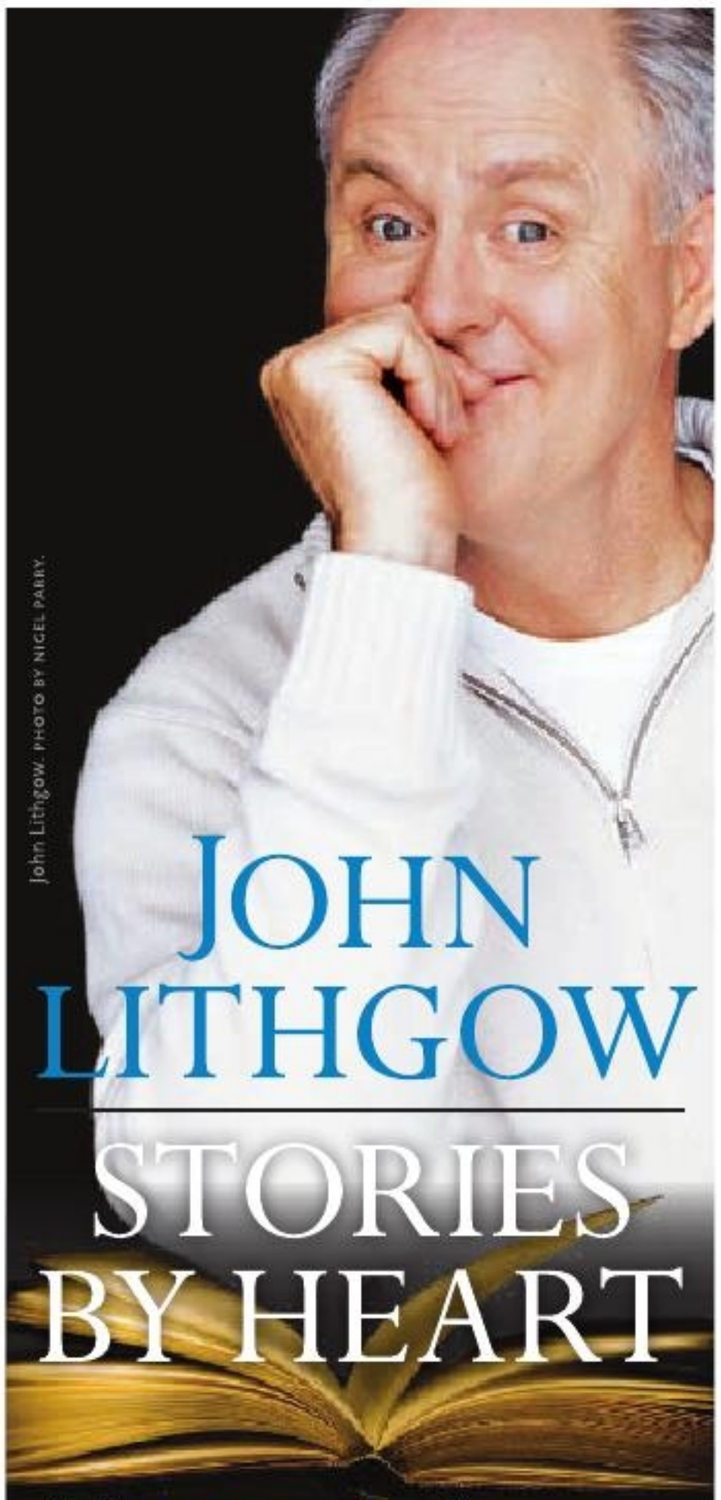

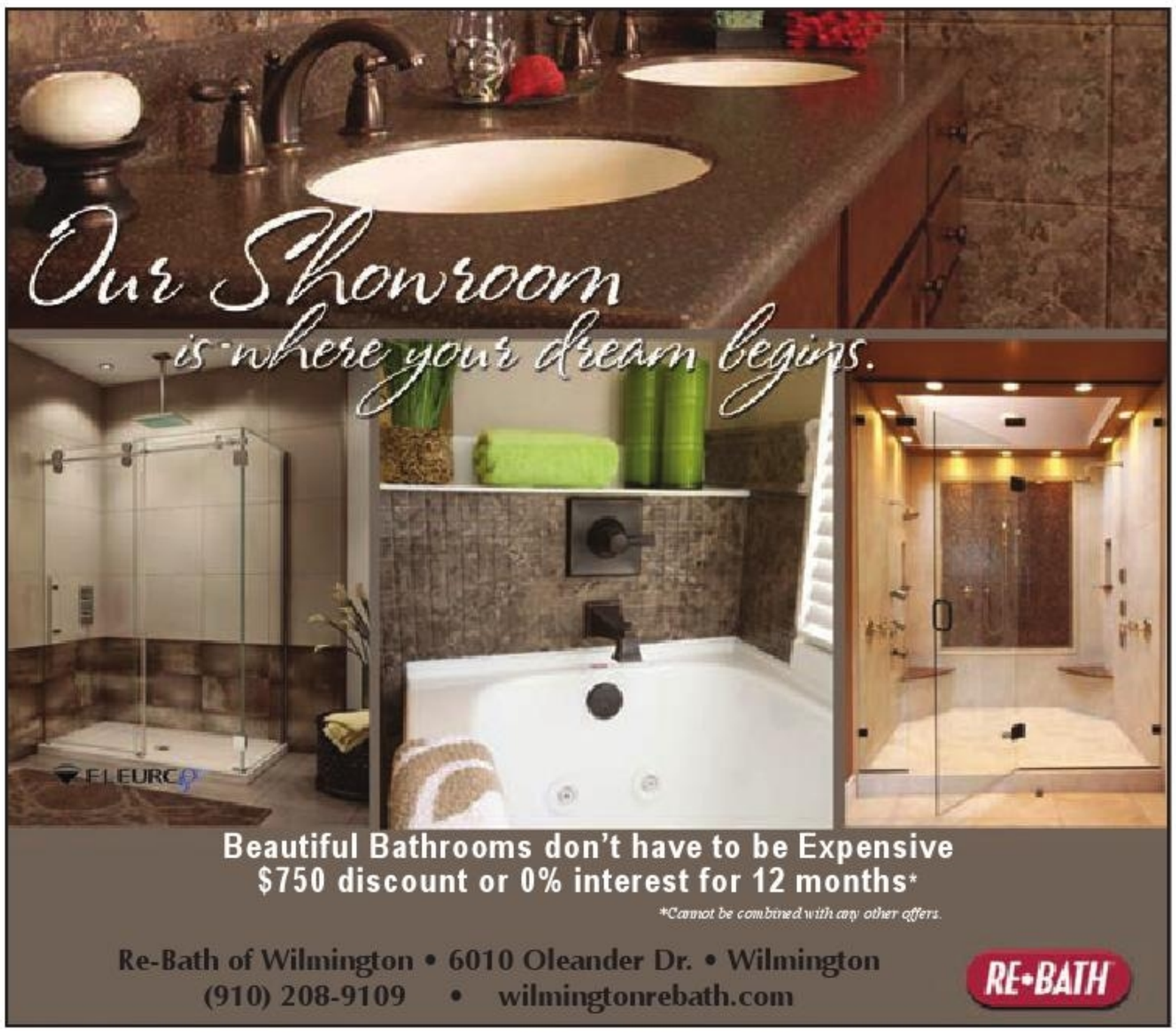
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The Birds of Paradise

By Jim Dodson

Maybe T. S. Eliot had it right about April. It is the cruelest month, breeding lilacs out of the dead land, mixing memory with desire, stirring dull roots with spring rain.

That was certainly the case for me thirty-five years ago this April when I ventured out to a rain-rutted ball field with broken fences, a few blocks from my house in midtown Atlanta, simply looking to write a sweet little piece for the Sunday magazine where I worked about the return of spring and rebirth of youth baseball in my racially mixed neighborhood.

Truthfully, I hoped such a piece might provide a much-needed lift to my mood, complicated by the breakup of my marriage engagement to a local anchorwoman and the work I'd been doing of late, interviewing pointy-headed Klansmen in Alabama and writing about Atlanta's dubious new designation as the "Murder Capital of America."

In short, it was a city under siege from a wave of terrifying murders of adolescent black kids that started the summer of 1979. More than a dozen young men had been killed by some unknown person or persons, their bodies grimly tossed into the Chattahoochee River. The police seemed helpless to find the perpetrators, and the city was on a knife's edge of tension.

Maybe sixty kids showed up for the League tryouts that warm April afternoon, barely enough to compose five teams. I watched them go through their drills and the league's director, a slightly frazzled woman with gray hair and a clipboard, a tough old bird named Miss Brenda, divide them up into squads, leaving one team — the Highland Park Orioles — one player short.

They were also missing a coach.

Miss Brenda spotted me making notes behind the sagging third-base fence and walked over.

"Hey, you know anything about baseball?"

I admitted I'd played growing up in North Carolina. Baseball was my passion at that time. I was also personally subsidizing Ted Turner's cellar-dwelling Braves with a season ticket and had just written a profile of Braves slugger Dale Murphy for a national sports magazine.

"Great," she said, "you can coach the Orioles. Their coach didn't show up."

"Oh, really, no I can't," I protested.

She gave me a hard look. "Why is that? You don't like kids?"

So I gave in. I really don't know why. She handed me a list of twelve names and a shopping bag with fifteen Oriole orange T-shirts, all the same size.

"I've got you guys scheduled for a first practice tomorrow. The season starts Saturday morning. You're playing the Astros. Last year they won the league title."

I went back to my new apartment on the ground floor of an old mansion on Monroe Drive and opened a cold beer, wondering what I'd gotten myself into.

Eleven players showed up for the first practice, seven black kids, four white. Four players were head and shoulders above the rest — Alvin, Pete, his brother, Freddie, and Rodney. They were pals from the same block in Capital Homes, possibly the worst housing project in the city, a place so dangerous even the beat cops I knew well hated to venture there after dark.

The Gang of Four, as I took to calling them from day one, filled the most vital spots on the field. Easygoing Freddie went to first, his chatty brother Pete pitched, Alvin took third and a fireplug named Rodney caught. Pete and Alvin would alternate at pitcher. Both had blazing fastballs and remarkable control.

If the infield was anchored by four terrific athletes, the rest of the field was chaos, seven kids who'd never played organized baseball. Two didn't even have decent gloves. The first of many financial investments I made in the team was to purchase a couple of fielder gloves the night before our first game. Another was to spring for a dozen (cheap) orange baseball caps.

We got drilled that Saturday by the mighty Astros, a lopsided game owing in part to the fact that Rodney the catcher failed to show up. The fill-in catcher kept jumping out of the way of Pete's fastballs.

"His daddy won't let him come no more," Pete explained.

"Why is that?'

"He don't want him to get killed by the crazy man."

After the game, I drove the gang home in my aging Volvo wagon. On the way there, for reasons that elude me, I stopped at Woody's and bought them chocolate milkshakes. Woody's was a neighborhood institution, run by a couple of fastidious fellows who made the city's best milkshakes and cheese steaks.

The gang lived off a street ironically named Paradise Street. Pete directed me to Rodney's house. I knocked and the door opened. A wary black dude stared at me and asked me what I wanted.

I told him who I was and explained that we'd missed having Rodney at our first game.

"He wants to play. But he ain't comin' no more," the man said.

"Why is that, sir?"

"Cause all this killin' shit goin' on. I don't want him walkin' nowhere."

I nodded. "What about this. What if I agree to pick up Rodney and his friends and bring them home?"

His gaze narrowed suspiciously. "Why would you do that?"

"Because he needs baseball," I said — choosing not to add that suddenly I realized I needed it, too.

"You do that," he said, "and he can play."

The next Friday afternoon we demolished the Chandler Park Yankees, who never even got a hit. The Gang of Four was incredible. After the game, I foolishly sprung for milkshakes again.

Over the next eight weeks, as the grim body count from Atlanta's missing and murdered children crisis mounted, we didn't lose a game — won them, in fact, by lopsided margins, football scores. Pete and Alvin were basically unhittable. Ready Freddie was cool as a cucumber, and Rodney was born to catch. I started calling

ILLUSTRATION BY KIRA SCHOENFELDER

them all the Birds of Paradise. In a way, that's what they were to me.

We easily won the league championship in early June, wiping the field with the once mighty Astros. We got nice little trophies and Miss Brenda wrung my hand.

"Thanks for helping out," she said. "See you next spring."

"Thank you," I said. "But I might have a job in Washington."

"Nah," she said. "You'll be back. The Birds will too."

On the way home, we stopped off at Woody's for a final milkshake and cheese steak. The team was so rowdy the owners threatened to throw us out.

The winter of 1980 was a busy one for me. I followed candidate George Bush across the frozen tundra of New England for the presidential primaries and went with him to Puerto Rico. I wrote more murder stories and hung out with the last gator hunter in the Okefenokee Swamp. Washington was still making noises, but the job offer didn't come.

Miss Brenda called right at the crack of April. "Tryouts are this Wednesday, Coach. I'll let you have the same players who've come back."

The Birds of Paradise were all back. The routine resumed—adding a couple more from Capital Homes to the load.

Naturally our first game was a no-hitter. Milkshakes and cheese steaks followed.

The Birds of Paradise asked to see where I worked, so I brought them downtown to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. They were beautifully behaved, perfect manners all around—though on the way home, as usual, they ransacked my car.

I suggested a team cookout at my apartment, hoping their parents might come. Only one white mother came. My new girlfriend helped out. The Birds had a glorious time playing my records and wrecking my home office, even finding my stash of *Playboy* magazines.

We didn't lose a game in season two. Our victory supper was held at Woody's, of course. The owners now welcomed us. The best part came when Dale Murphy stopped by to say hello. The Birds went crazy.

On a lark, I called up the president of the Buckhead youth baseball league and suggested we play an unofficial Metro championship. He liked the idea and suggested we do it at their field in the all-white suburbs. I even drove Pete and Freddie out to see the field. Unlike ours, their field had lights, actual bleachers, a perfect grass surface, even a concession stand.

A day later though, the Buckhead guy called me back and said we had to cancel. "Some of our parents think it might make your kids feel bad, given all that's going on right now."

I took the Birds for a final round of shakes and steaks at Woody's and apologized.

A week or so after this, a self-styled music promoter named Wayne Williams was arrested for the murder of two adults and accused by Atlanta police of being responsible for twenty-three of the twenty-nine missing and murdered children. A year later he was convicted and is serving a life sentence.

Not long after that, I left for Washington and eventually moved to New England.

A decade later, I tracked down the original Gang of Four and invited them out to dinner in Buckhead with my wife Alison.

Pete, Ready Freddie and Rodney showed up. Alvin was in the Army and couldn't make it. Rodney was about to join the Navy. Freddie and Pete had both gone to college, Freddie on a scholarship.

We had a fine time, talking about those remarkable baseball seasons, then we hugged and parted, promising to stay in touch.

Not long ago I was in Atlanta on business and was pleased to discover Woody's was still there, still packed, still selling great cheese steaks and shakes.

I sat in a corner booth where the Birds used to gather, making way too much noise and horsing around, thinking how grateful I remain to them for ransacking my life when I needed it most.

Wherever they flew away to in this world, I hope they know how much they meant to me.

Contact editor Jim Dodson at jim@saltmagazinenc.com.

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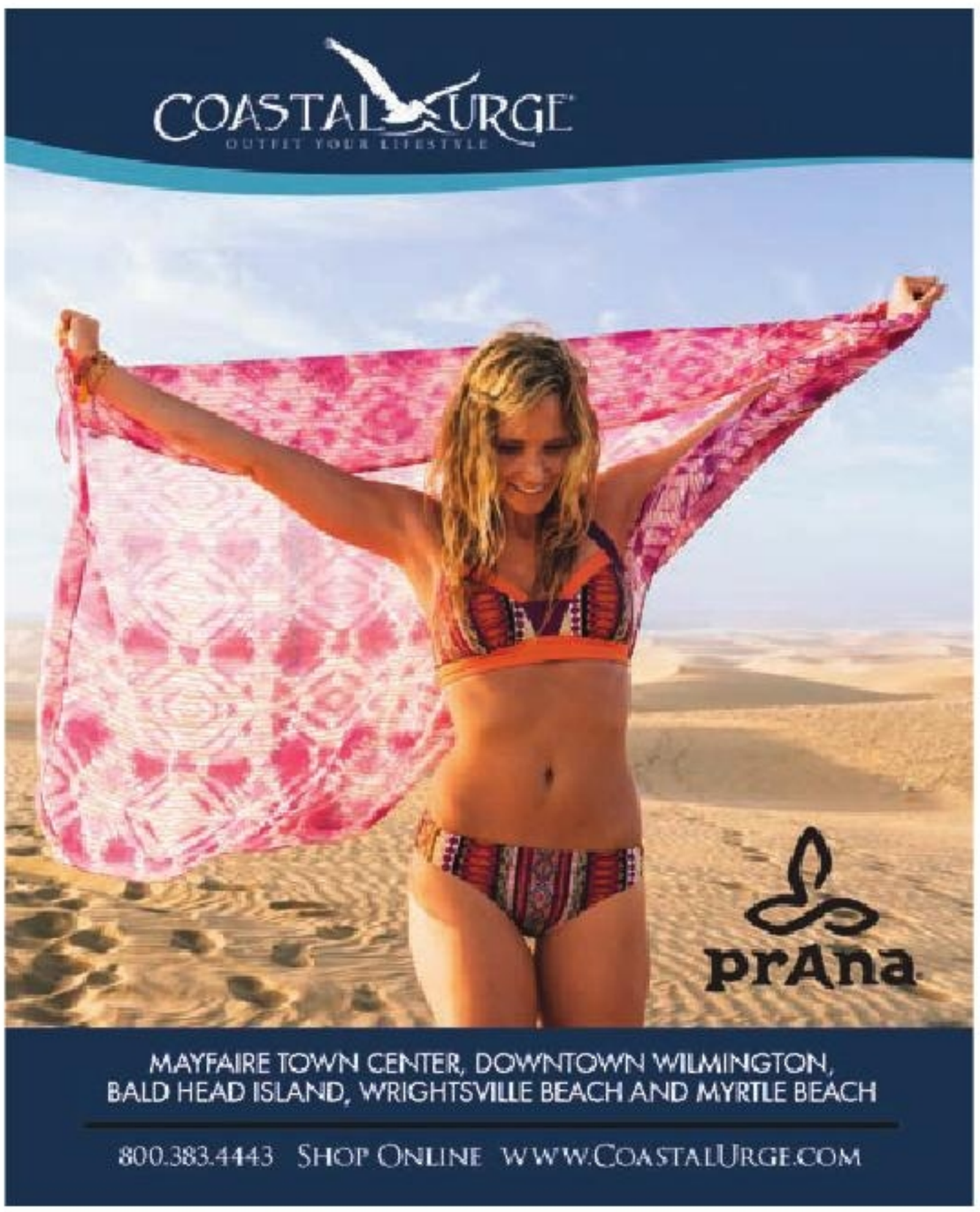

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BOLD ON THE RUNWAY, 8 PM

SATURDAY, APRIL 4TH — LOVE LOCAL, ALL DAY
SPRING/SUMMER 2015, 6 PM
SHOP THE RUNWAY, 7 PM
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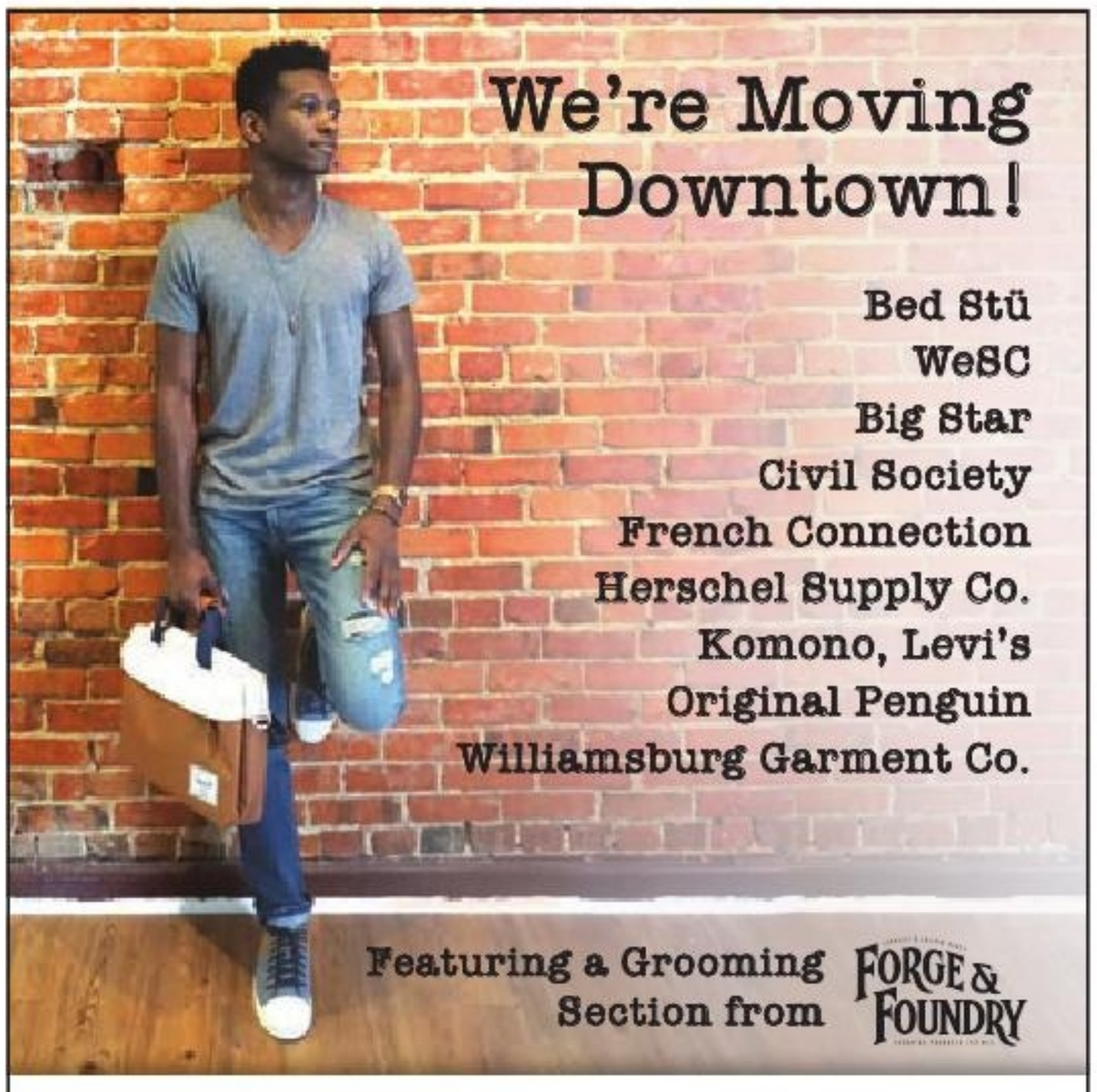

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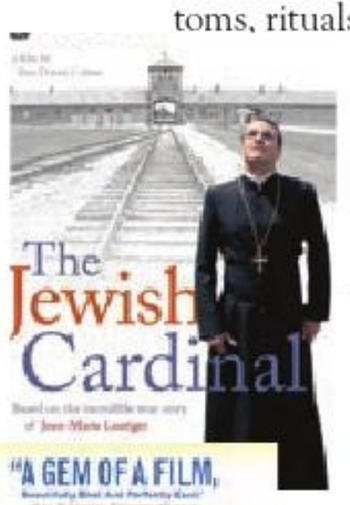
Some Like It Hot

A born-and-bred NYC actor met a Parisian-born writer at an open jazz jam over a noodle shop in Manhattan and, in so many words, The Hot Sardines were born. On Saturday, April 25, at 7:30 p.m., Thalian Hall presents The Hot Sardines, a band straight out of a quirky indie film. As the name suggests, the Sardines serve up something a little bit different. Think wartime Paris via New Orleans, or vice versa, with nods to Louis Armstrong, Django Reinhardt and Billie Holiday. The magic involves a blustery brass lineup, a rhythm section led by a stride-piano virtuoso of the Fats Waller vein, a tap dancer, and a fiery, washboard-playing front woman with a voice from another era. In addition to their residency at New York's famed Joe's Pub, the Sardines have performed at the Boom Boom Room, the internationally-known Montreal Jazz Festival, the Shanghai Mermaid, and Symphony Hall in Boston. Come see — and hear — why critics are calling the Sardines simply electrifying. Tickets: $20 (gallery); $29 –36 (parquet, dress circle). Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.thalianhall.org.

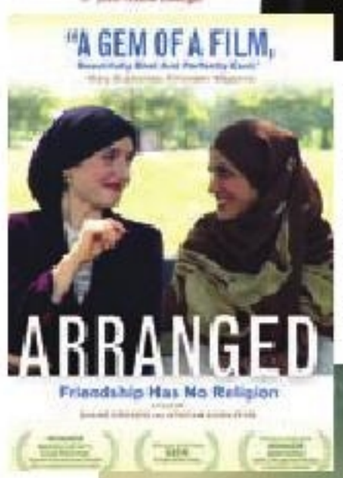
Pass the Popcorn

This year, April 19–26, the second annual Wilmington Jewish Film Festival includes six award-winning feature films — six unique perspectives on Jewish identity, customs, rituals, history and contemporary global politics.



Sunday, April 19, 3 p.m. *The Jewish Cardinal*, biographical documentary, tells the story of Jean Marie Lustiger and his angst-laden struggles to figure out how he can be both Jewish and Catholic.

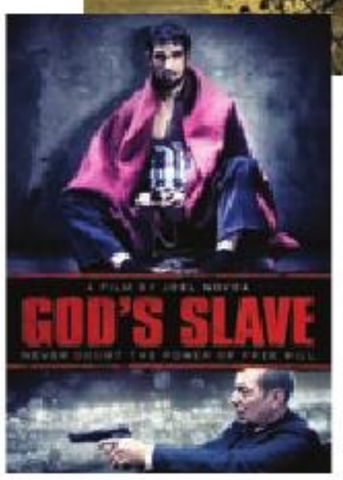
Monday, April 20, 7 p.m. *Run, Boy, Run*, based on the book by Uri Orlev, depicts the real story of a 9-year-old Polish boy who escapes the Warsaw ghetto and survives for three years in Nazi-occupied Poland.



Wednesday, Apri 22, 7 p.m. *Arranged*, Best Feature Film Chameleon Award winner at the Brooklyn International Film Festival, is a tale of friendship between two women, an Orthodox Jew and a Pakistani Muslim.

Sunday, April 26, 3 p.m. *Above and Beyond*, heroic documentary produced by Nancy Spielberg, depicts the creation of the Israeli Air Force in 1948.

Monday, April 27, 7 p.m. *The Art Dealer*, mystery-drama by renowned French director Francois Margolin, depicts the morally compromised world of Nazi-looted art.



Wednesday, April 29, 7 p.m. *God's Slave*, suspense thriller, explores violent Middle Eastern politics set against the bombing of a Jewish community center in Argentina in 1994.

Tickets: $10 (Monday and Wednesday); $15 (Sunday). Films screened at Thalian Hall Main Stage, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.wilmingtonjff.org.

PHOTOGRAPH BY LEANN MUELLER

Our Limerick Winners

Back in January, *Salt* announced our 2015 Cape Fear Limerick Contest, asking readers to submit an original poem including the word "cape" or "fear" in one of its five lines. Thanks to all who participated. Your ditties were a treat. Here are our top picks:

On a voyage to visit the Pope,
Pilgrims sailed past the Cape of Good Hope;
But with seas so severe,
"This must be Cape Fear!"
They exclaimed as they clung to the boat.

— Bill Bivins

There was an old gal from Cape Fear
who took a quick glance in the mirror.
She said with distain,
"This gray is a pain!
But at least I don't have a big rear."

— Doug Holmgren

There once was a woman so dear
who, bless her heart, knew no fear.
She donned a black cape
to make her escape
and hasn't been seen in a year.

— Nily R. Walters

Home Re-imagined

Everything you need to know in four words: Upscale Resale Designer Challenge. Cape Fear Habitat for Humanity and the Habitat ReStores will present its VIP preview party and design awards on Friday, May 1, from 6 –9 p.m., an event featuring finished vignettes created by area interior design teams using furniture, rugs, lighting, artwork and curios found at local Habitat ReStores — nothing more. Repurposed, refinished, reupholstered and reused items will be available for purchase at the show and merchandise sale on Saturday, May 2, from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Proceeds benefit Cape Fear Habitat for Humanity. Tickets to the VIP preview party and design awards are $35 in advance, $40 at the door, and include Saturday admission. Tickets to the show and sale: $5. CFCC's Schwartz Center, 601 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: CapeFearHabitat.org.

Enchanted Miniatures

They say fairies come in many forms, bring good luck and laughter, and sleep beneath blankets of fern and creeping fig. On Friday, April 17, artist Kathleen McLead will lead a Fairy Garden Workshop in whimsical Southport, 9 a.m., when the world is still stirring from dreamland. Drawing from the lore and legends of the mythical fae — that they like doors, for instance, and all things shiny — create an enchanted miniature universe in hopes of attracting the wee ones into your own realm of magic. Do you believe? Bring your own container, no larger than 12 square inches, and your wild imagination. Moss, lichen, rocks, stones, soil and teeny-tiny bridges supplied. Registration: $35. Southport Fairy Garden Workshop also held on May 15. Wild Bird & Garden, 105 East Brown Street, Southport. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

Pretty Maids All in a Row

She's back. April 8–12, the North Carolina Azalea Festival means it's time again to paint the town red, pink, purple — every breathtaking shade of azalea you can imagine. We're talking about the garden parties, art shows, street fairs and concerts, plus Cape Fear Garden Club's renowned Azalea Garden Tour (see page 64 for a preview), and Historic Wilmington Foundation's Historic Home Tour, which takes place Saturday, April 11, from 1–6 p.m., and Sunday, April 12, from 1–5 p.m. Nine historic homes, all fine examples of Wilmington's diverse architecture, and the Basilica Shrine of Saint Mary, a vibrant display of Spanish Baroque. Tickets: $25. Proceeds support the Historic Wilmington Foundation. Info: www.historicwilmington.org.

Less is More

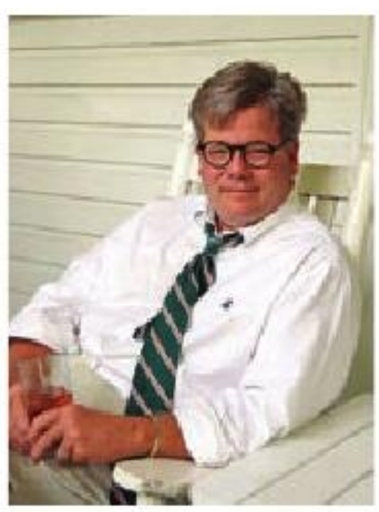
Celebrate National Poetry Month with local poet Andrea Young and her mentor, Eric Weil, Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poet for Eastern North Carolina, as they read selected poems on Tuesday, April 14, at 7 p.m. Eric Weil, author of three poetry chapbooks (*A Horse at the Hirshhorn*, *Returning from Mars*, and *Ten Years In*), is an associate professor of English at Elizabeth City State University. Young's poetry will make your hair stand on end. Free. New Hanover County Main Library, 201 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6300.

Not Forgotten

In last month's issue of *Salt*, photographer Mark Steelman introduced us to a handful of local veterans through a series of intimate portraits. Some shared memories of war. Some kept stories to themselves. This month, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), Chapter 885, Lower Cape Fear Region will honor all veterans of all wars during a four-day celebration in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. The celebration kicks off on Thursday, April 23, from 1–4 p.m., with a Vietnam remembrance ceremony at Hugh MacRae Park. On Friday, April 24, two screenings of *To Heal a Nation* will run at the Coastline Convention Center prior to a welcome aboard reception. Concerts at Greenfield Lake Amphitheater on Saturday precede a veterans appreciation reception and banquet downtown and, on Sunday, breakfast on the Battleship. See website for complete schedule, event locations and registration. Info: 50thcelebrationvietnamwar.org.

A Round for the Kids

The Children's Museum of Wilmington's fourth annual "Fore the Children" golf tournament is scheduled to take place on Monday, April 20, at Cape Fear Country Club. Highlights include hole-in-one car prize by Rippy Cadillac and an awards ceremony with special guest speaker Jim Dodson, *Salt* editor and best-selling author whose award-winning golf books include *Final Rounds* and *Son of the Game*. Shotgun start at noon. Registration: $600/foursome; $150/golfer. Cape Fear Country Club, 1518 Country Club Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-3534 or www.playwilmington.org.



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Ballads of Change

From Front Street to the Switchyard, life springs back and the song goes on

By Ashley Wahl

Front Street is a poem I know by heart.

Beyond the walls of the old Bullock Hospital Building, the world gained momentum with each cup of coffee. Neighbors became friends, and you could set your watch to the daily routines of perfect strangers, like the woman with the wire-haired terrier, always at the Bijou Park courtyard at 8 o'clock, always smiling in the dappled morning light.

Time itself moved at a different speed. Days clicked by like carriage horses, were peppered with snippets from passersby and ghost walk tours; punctuated by fiery sunsets over the glimmering Cape Fear.

**

One year ago, *Salt* relocated from downtown to "The Switchyard" off Market Street, a funky industrial space laced with a railroad spur that interrupts nature. The drive here takes you past a dense stand of towering pines and a small pond, bluebirds and buntings springing forth like bits of confetti as resident dogs roam the grassy lot off-leash. It's a curious hideaway: Walden Pond smack in-between Bojangles' Famous Chicken 'n Biscuits and the Carmike 16 Cinema.

Here, former site of a power boat facility (before that it was a fertilizer distribution center), birds run on a schedule set more by the seasons than the clock. Like the small blue heron, who fishes at twilight. Or the belted kingfisher, still on his low-level perch. Or the snowy egret, wading through the shallows as if on stilts.

The raucous call of the red-headed woodpecker carries through wind and glass. You can watch him from the loft, flitting between two hollow pines beyond the tracks: back and forth, back and forth, tucking away extra grub for later.

Like an ancient goddess, the sycamore reveals the beauty of each season. Her meters are varied but her rhythm you can't deny.

**

Wilmington artist Claude Howell was working as a stenographer at the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad when he witnessed the 1936 demolition of the old downtown post office building. He wrote about it in his sacred journal:

It is rather sad, watching the brown sandstone wall crumbling down bit by bit . . . I always took the building for granted, but now that it is going I feel like I am losing an old friend.

That's how it felt to discover that the lot beside the Wetsig pond was being cleared last fall.

As the last tree crashed into the earth, I mourned for the birds.

**

From the windowed loft, a beam of light, a thin veil of pine fringes the pond, beyond which Wilmington's newest fire station slowly rises. The crew works rhythmically, the droning of construction machinery adding to the ever-expanding ballad.

Weeks passed, but the familiars returned. First, heron and egret. Then, belted kingfisher. Turtles re-emerged, parking like cars along the sunny bank, but no woodpecker. Not for a while.

**

Shortly after his return, welcome as a smile from The Art Council's Rhonda Bellamy on a walk to the downtown post office, the blustering winds of an early spring rain felled one of the hollow pines. I was looking out the window when it snapped in two.

**

Day after the storm, a raucous call announced the woodpecker was back. From my perch, I watched him flit between the pine that weathered the storm and a tall, healthy-looking one. In nature, there's no time to mourn. He works rhythmically, raps on a new door.

Change is the poem he knows by heart.

Our spy, senior editor Ashley Wahl, is prone to wander.

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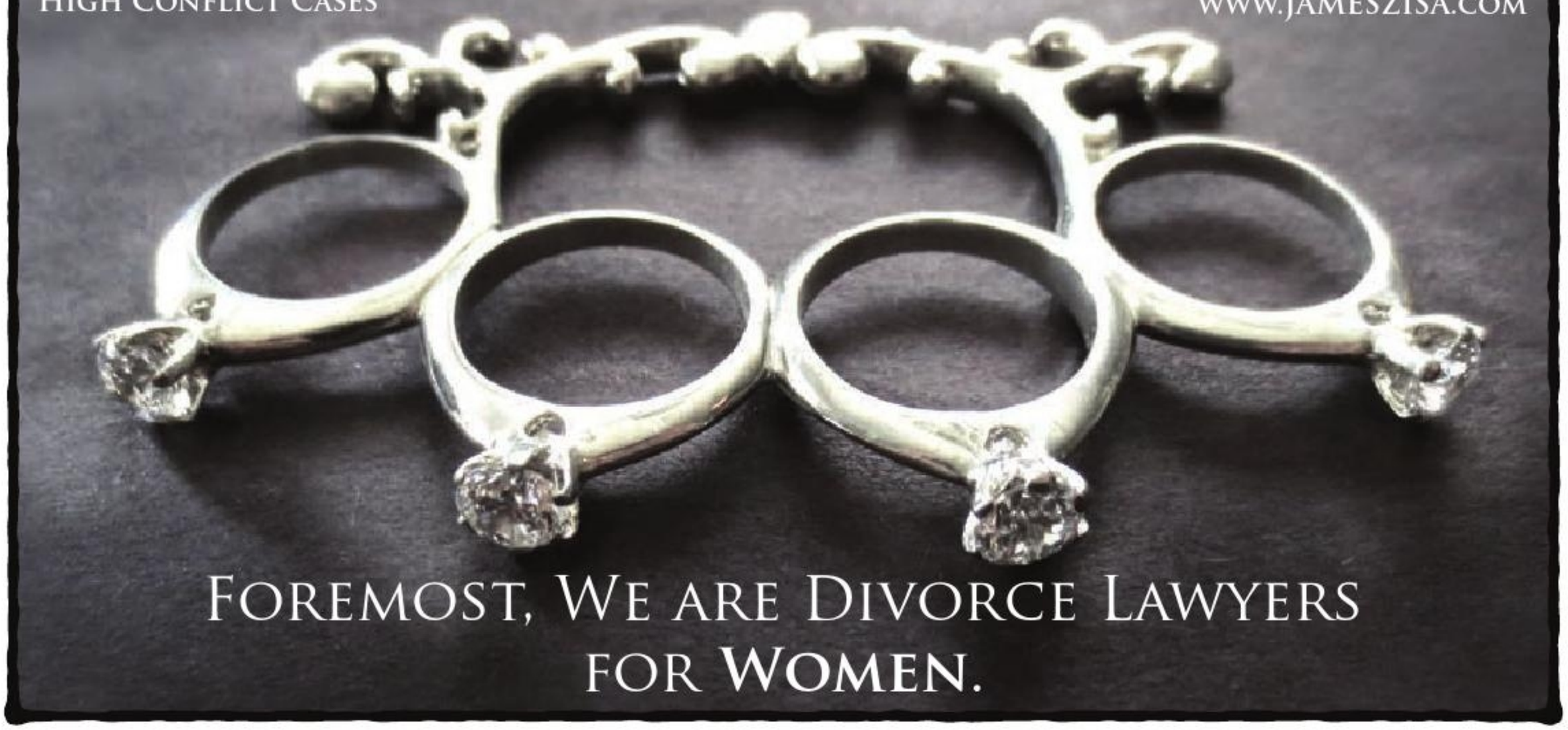

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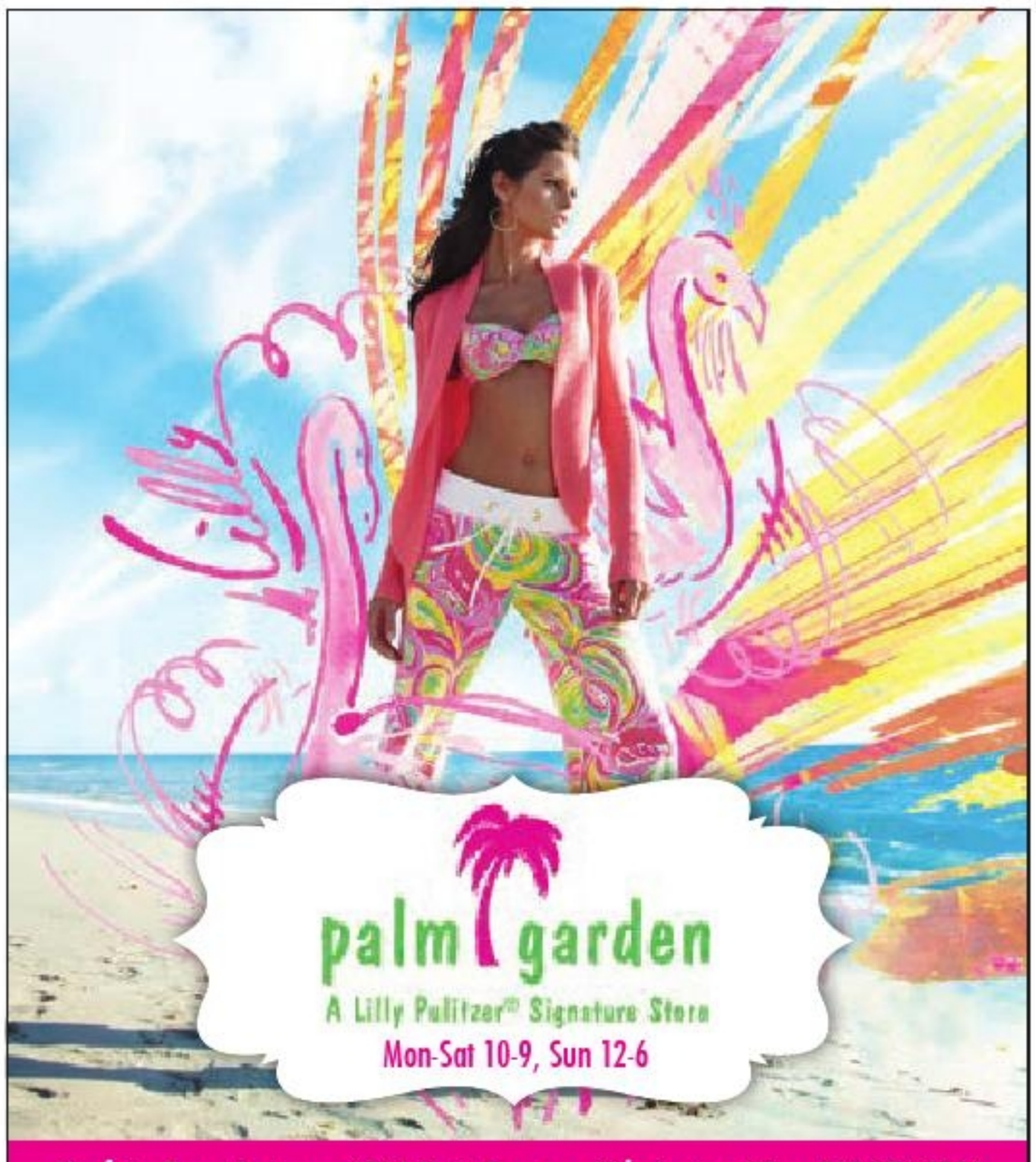

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The Ten-Minute Musical

A young master of the form bids goodbye to Wilmington – for now

By Gwenyfar Rohler

"OK, I've only told two people about this idea . . ."

Christopher Dayett chuckles as he recounts the moment in 2009 when he approached Barbara Gallagher about writing a full-length musical together. They had just wrapped work on Gallagher's operetta about the life of St. Brigit of Kildare, and Dayett felt compelled to approach her about collaborating on the musical he was dreaming about, called *Follow Your Dreams*.

But any writer will tell you that the road from concept to production of a full-length musical — or play — is very long.

"For graduation I received all these inspirational cards . . . 'Your life is an empty page waiting to be written' and Rudyard Kipling's 'If' was in there," Dayett recalls. Like many people finishing up college, he was casting about, trying to figure out what the next step looked like. The cards seemed to be speaking to him, and he quietly began to formulate the idea of writing a musical, even though he admits that he "didn't know anything about playwriting or about songwriting." He bought a little black notebook to jot down musings, mostly while at Masonboro Island.

Since the early '90s, the ten-minute play has developed into a specific subgenre that frequently appears in festivals and showcases of new playwrights around the country. Last year I found myself at such an event for a local group of playwrights workshopping ten-minute plays-in-progress. The surprise for the evening was *Check, Please!*, a ten-minute musical by Christopher Dayett. Now this twist on the genre is not unheard of, though far less well-known than the "straight play" version. Intrigued by the success of the ten-minute plays coming out of Louisville, Kentucky, Joe Papp of the Public Theatre in New York City issued a call for ten-minute musicals, which were largely viewed like demo tapes. But the idea took root, and The Ten-Minute Musicals Project has grown up on the West Coast.

In 1989, the Actors Theatre of Louisville sent out a call for ten-minute plays written by undiscovered playwrights. The response was surprising, and by the mid-90s, several collections of the ten-minute plays had been published and were being produced across the country in professional, repertory and educational settings. For the would-be writer, it sounds approachable — at least more so than putting together a two-hour, full-length show. But as Nick Gray pointed out to me when he directed a ten-minute play showcase for City Stage a few years ago, with a ten-minute play, you have to know exactly where you're going and how to get there quick.

Apparently I am not the only person amazed by the idea of a ten-minute musical. Dayett found himself asking, "How do you tell a complete story with music in ten minutes? I looked it up on Google, YouTube . . . I wasn't sure how to do it." But he had the idea for the short plot of *Check, Please!* and started writing. "I had written more songs, but as we tabled and workshopped it . . . the comment was, 'Cut this one, focus on this one.'"

Dayett's *Check, Please!* was the first ten-minute musical I'd seen live, and I was blown away by the artistry and craft that went into the construction of it. The musical theater form is very specific, and much more subtle than many audience members realize. In ten minutes, Dayett told a complete story with plot twists and character development — all with the accompaniment of song. "In musical theater," says Dayett, "the songs are what make the show . . . they are the monologues. One of my favorite things is to work with people in acting through music — I am a singer who acts — who enjoys emoting in a song."

It has taken years to put that statement into words, but working on a series of original productions contributed greatly to understanding it. Perhaps working on the premiere of Dorothy Papadakos' show *Pompeii The Musical* was what really kicked it in to high gear for Dayett. It was really his first opportunity to work with an Actors' Equity cast and to see a show come to fruition — including all the warts of the creative process that the audience doesn't usually see. "We worked really hard on one scene and it was cut right before the show," Dayett explains. "Watching the whole process and watching Dorothy as her dream — and her process — is coming to life was really inspirational." He pauses, then repeats, "Really inspirational."

After several years of working in our area and trying to get his musical with Gallagher (*Follow Your Dreams*) produced, Dayett has jumped into the deep end of the pool — or at least the deep end of Pennsylvania — and moved to Villanova for a masters program in theater. "This was a big decision for me to spend the next two years in school and not know where I will be in five years," Dayett notes. But it has fueled his writing. Look for a new musical adaptation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Even though the collaboration with Gallagher hasn't gone where Dayett hoped it would, he has learned a lot. "If you have an idea and people put it down, find ways that you might alter it — but don't give it up!" He is adamant. "It's been difficult to get back up after that — it becomes inspirational. Some of my best writing comes out of me being knocked down."

Gwenyfar Rohler spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street.

When it comes to teens and alcohol, consistency is the golden rule.
Jill, Anheuser-Busch employee, and daughter Tori
Setting rules—and sticking to them—can help prevent underage drinking.
Our high-schoolers have a lot of milestones ahead of them: prom, graduation and college. At times, it may be tempting to relax the rules and let them celebrate with alcohol. But according to experts, that's a big mistake. We've spent a lot of time teaching them to respect the rules, and if we start to make exceptions, we may send the signal that underage drinking is a "grey area." More than ever, this is the time to maintain consistency; special events don't call for special rules. To learn more, join us on Facebook and download our free Parent Guide.
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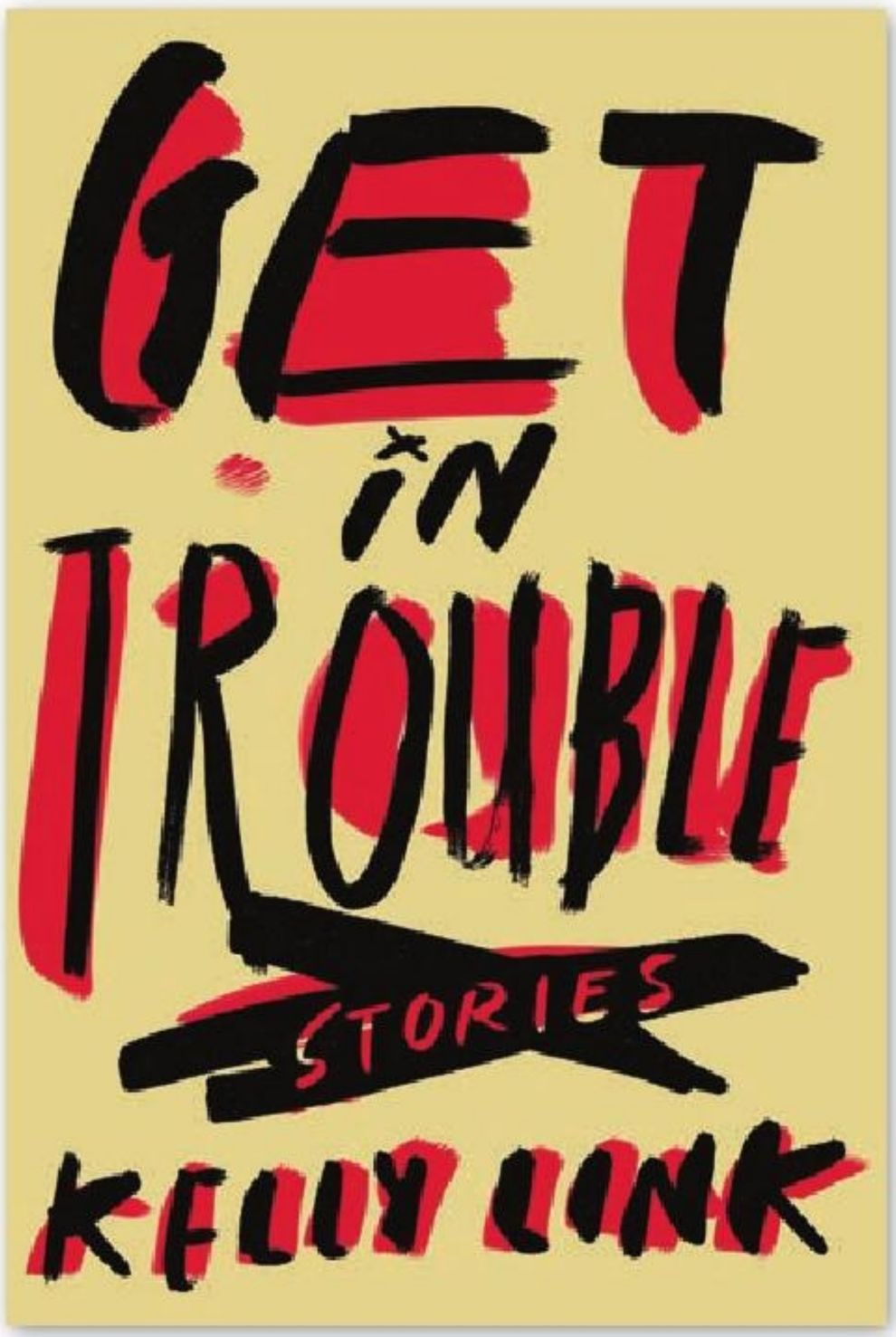
The Good Kind of Trouble



By Brian Lampkin

Kelly Link has an original mind. The stories in her newest collection, *Get in Trouble* (Random House, 2015, $25), are all off-center, strange but familiar, perhaps like the inside of a friend's mind. You recognize much of the territory because you've shared many of the experiences, but it's all slightly akilter and filled with magical thinking that doesn't quite jive with your own view of reality. But this view is so interesting, so compelling, because it is an entirely fresh and unusual look at something you thought familiar and normal. You get to see the world differently, and we should all be grateful for this new look at the everyday world.

Get in Trouble is Link's fourth collection of stories, and she has received extraordinary praise from writers like Michael Chabon (who says Link has "the most darkly playful voice in American fiction") and Neil Gaiman (who calls her "a national treasure"). This national treasure has North Carolina connections — she received an M.F.A. from the UNCG in 1995 — and *Get in Trouble's* first story, "The Summer People," is set in rural North Carolina where the economically struggling locals and the more affluent seasonal residents uneasily mingle. (The writing program at UNCG is a continuous source of literary fire. Here are just a few who are burning it up: poet and novelist Robert Morgan (*Gap Creek*), Pulitzer Prize winning poet Claudia Emerson, the 2014 Yale Series of Younger Poets winner Ansel Elkins, along with other established writers such as Steve Almond, Lynne Barrett, Julianna Baggott, Camille Dungy, Drew Perry, Rowan Jacobson, Tim Sandlin, etc.)

Many of Link's stories are set in spaces — imaginative or physical — that allow for a dreamy kind of overworld. In "The Summer People" Fran is in the midst of a brain-wracking fever so effectively described that it puts the reader in the same uncomfortably delirious suspension. The things that follow — toys capable of fanciful actions, creatures like fairies who inhabit a spellbound house — all seem part of the story's own fever.

Carved into the stairs of this house are the words, "BE BOLD, BE BOLD, BUT NOT TOO BOLD." The quote, taken from Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, describes Link's approach to storytelling. The emphasis is on boldness, on taking real chances with the limits of realistic fiction, but somehow tying it all back to a physical and emotional life that resonates with readers. In "I Can See Right Through You," Link uses the alternate reality of the film world (again, a space easily adaptable to a confusion between what's real and what's not) to look at the spellbinding nature of lifelong friendship uncertain about its parameters. The "demon lover" of the story is both a character from a vampire movie franchise and a haunting and haunted ex-lover of his costar Meggie. The fantasy sexual world of the films constantly

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plays out in the "real" world Link has created for her characters — especially so when fans of the films want a sexual piece of the stars but cannot separate fact from fiction and demand real blood. But Meggie and her demon lover also have a shaky hold on reality and past and present are at times indecipherable.

Which seems to me one of the great roles of storytelling. Stories commingle our imagined real world with the imaginative fictive world. Link's stories are in many ways fairy tales in the deep tradition of Grimm's. She uses stories as a means of exposing to light the dark, often unspeakable, visions and versions of reality our minds constantly process. Link gives us permission to enter worlds we often shrink from. Her boldness frees us to go bravely into spaces we might otherwise run from. "Two Houses" gives us another strange location:

"This is how it was aboard the spaceship House of Secrets. You slept and you woke and you slept again. You might sleep for a year, for five years. There were six astronauts. Sometimes others were already awake. Sometimes you spent days, a few weeks alone. Except you were never really alone. Maureen was always there. She was there sleeping and waking. She was inside you, too."

This story is science fiction, I suppose, and there's a Kubrick film lurking at the edges, but it's also entirely about ghost stories and the necessity of them in our lives. Because, Link writes, "they were all ghosts now," floating gravityless in their spaceship, more asleep than awake, and the implication for our own lives is clear. We're all ghosts, or soon to be ghosts, sometimes sleepwalking through our lives.

"Two Houses" makes us look at this ghostly doppelganger and it isn't always pretty to look at, but maybe it's necessary to trouble our lives with apparition. Link seems to know that this is "a good kind of trouble," and woe to us all if we ignore the looming darknesses of our inner lives.

Get in Trouble is a command. These stories demand an exploration of the hazy horizon separating the real and unreal. Link wants to trouble our minds with the "unnatural worlds." In "Two Houses" she writes, "The candles were not real, but the cake was," which, in one remarkable sentence, explores the role of metaphor, the future of technology and the simultaneous occurrence of separate realities. Read Kelly Link for a dreamlike trip to places you're half-afraid to travel to, but know you'll be glad you went.

Winner of the World Fantasy Award, the Hugo Award and three Nebula Awards, Kelly Link's previous books include *Stranger Things Happen* (2001), *Magic for Beginners* (2005) and *Pretty Monster* (2008).

Brian Lampkin is an owner of Greensboro's Scuppernong Books.

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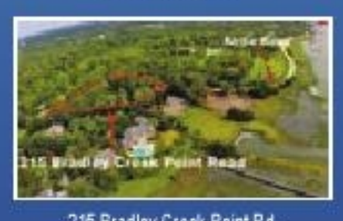

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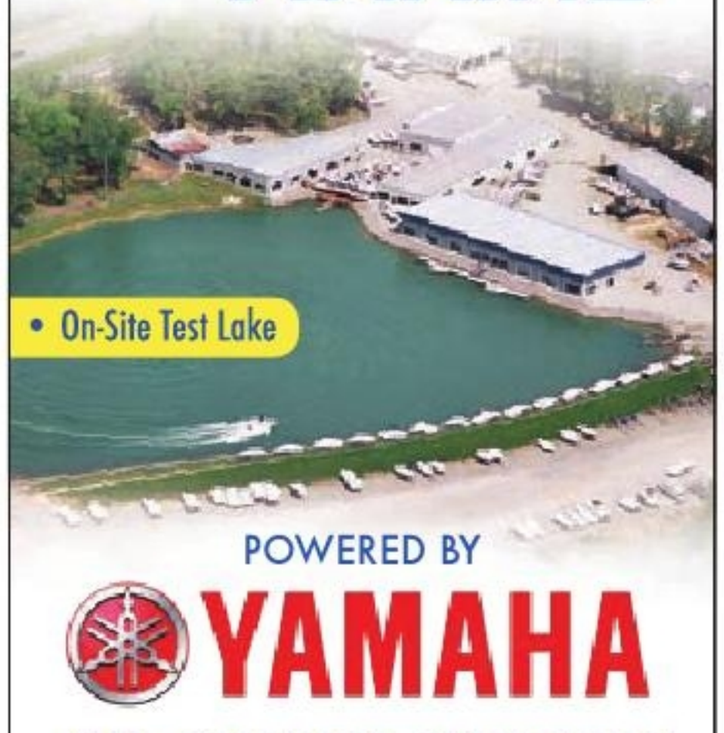

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Art in Plain Sight

At beloved and historic Good Shepherd Church, a long overdue restoration project begins

By John Evans

We all enjoy the thrill of owning beautiful things. The ability to enjoy them at any time can be deeply satisfying. However, when we are custodians of objects that are also rare and historic, ownership sometimes flows the other way too. Then, they begin to remind us of our loyal spouse with a radiant smile and a failing hip. Then, something must be done.

In 1892, Saint James Episcopal Church built a small, auxiliary church on the corner of Sixth and Queen streets, naming it the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. In 1907 it was reorganized and renamed the Church of the Good Shepherd. It was intended as a missionary church to serve the working class area of Dry Pond, which then comprised the southern edge of Wilmington.

In 1913, the original chapel was replaced by a more substantial masonry, Gothic-style structure designed by the accomplished New York architectural firm of Upjohn & Conable. These costs were underwritten by Saint James Episcopal Church with considerable support from the estate of Armand De Rosset. One of the finer attributes of this new structure was a collection of well-executed stained glass windows. The most inspiring among them is a depiction of Jesus rescuing a lost lamb. It looms above a simple altar, instructing all with a soft beauty. Immediately above the figure of Jesus carrying a lost lamb is an expansive sky, infused with violets and reds, suggesting passion and nobility. Above it all is a rich foliage of green fig leaves interspersed with deep, pure blues. They whisper an impression of a rich and complex heavenly firmament.

Originally, the medieval Church used stained glass windows to inspire and instruct the great mass of humanity whether they could read or not. This harnessing of art to the serious business of spiritual restoration has been a magnificent success. Visual beauty touches the heart, bringing an instantaneous and instinctive awe that the written word often struggles to achieve. This early example of art for the masses has paved the way for much of the visual splendor that we now take for granted. We need to keep examples of such bridges to our past accessible so that we never forget why we are as we are today.

Here on Earth, the Church of the Good Shepherd has always sought practical ways to extend a helping hand to those who traverse the broken ground found on the edge of the American dream. Superintendent Heyward Bellamy, who oversaw the integration of the Wilmington public schools in the 1960s and '70s, worshipped here. In the 1980s and '90s, Good Shepherd Ministries was started here as a soup kitchen and day shelter. Now known as Good Shepherd Center, it is fully independent and self-supporting and has relocated to 811 Martin Street. Recently, the church has been working to better the lives of the migrant farm workers to our west and in our own neighborhood through the homeless ministry of the Rescue Mission. Looking forward, the Church of the

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Good Shepherd continues to discern and plan to find new ways to do something useful in our community with its resources.

Among those resources, Good Shepherd has a number of buildings. They are generally in good condition, although the stained glass windows are now in serious need of repair. The details of these repairs do not draw upon modern science. The frames are deteriorating. An oxidizing lead matrix needs to be evaluated and repaired. Broken and missing glass needs mending. The structural framework that should provide support for the glass needs to be reattached to the glass panels. Catastrophic collapse indeed looms. The prime ingredient that spells the difference between a lasting restoration and a superficial fix is a patient and thorough application of Old World artisanship.

Enter Francisco Castillo, a man dedicated to traditional values and craft. A contract with his company, CGC Historic Renovations, has been signed for the first phase of work. The first window, an arched demi-panel in the entrance portico has been removed and now rests in Castillo's workshop on Moss Street.

Quality work is not cheap. The total cost may reach $110,000 by the time the windows and their adjacent walls have been set right. The church begging bowl now circulates among those who care about beauty and history.

By the time you read this, Good Shepherd's annual Shrove Tuesday Oyster Roast will have come and gone. The church will also have held its first "Afternoon Tea in the Manner of Downton Abbey." This spring will likely see benefit concerts and other opportunities to harness money to achieve an inspiring result. The details are not that important. What matters is that the church has started and will finish. Both the result and the path taken to arrive there will be distinguished by beauty. Come and see.

For more information, call (910) 763-6080, or visit www.goodshepherdchurch-wilmington.com/ or www.facebook.com/goodshepherdchurch.nc.

John Evans has an appetite for spiritual adventure. His new book, A Second look at Jesus: The Experience of a Christian Mystic, *is a memoir about what has worked for him. It is available on Amazon and local book stores, including Pomegranate, Two Sisters Bookery and Old Books on Front Street.*

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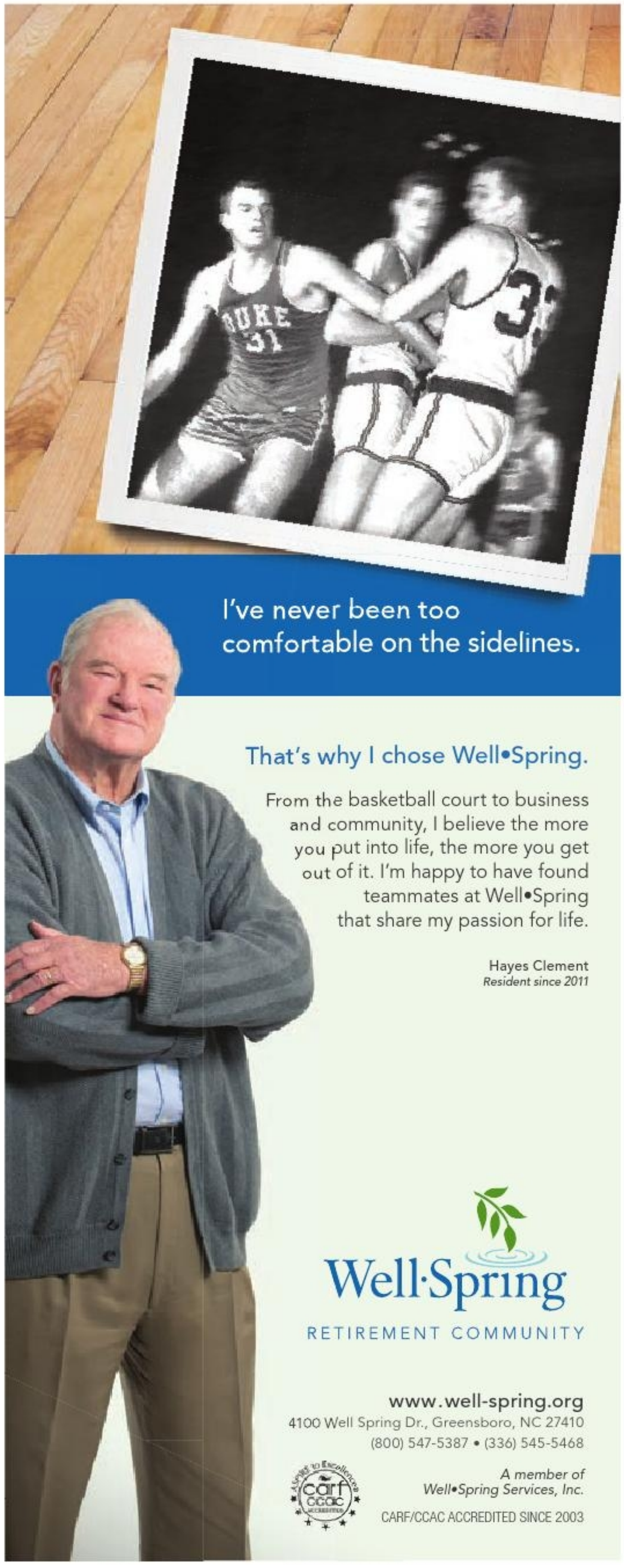
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David Longo
Executive Chef

Each Dish Better Than the Last

At Inlet 790 in North Topsail Beach, Chef David Longo dazzles you with surprisingly simple flavors

By Jason Frye

Photograph by James Stefiuk

***It's the best fish taco** I've ever eaten. Throw the other fish tacos in the garbage, because this is the best fish taco I've ever eaten.*

These are my exact thoughts while sitting at a table in Inlet 790, a restaurant in North Topsail Beach, with the chef, David Longo. He's watching me eat, which is a strange situation to find yourself in, and the only thing that keeps me from saying what I'm thinking is a mouthful of the best fish taco I've ever eaten.

Once I've eaten the whole thing — in four bites, not three, I'm no animal — I play it cool. "Wow, that's one hell of a fish taco," I say. All I can think about is the chipotle sauce, the cotija cheese, that tempura cod.

It's been this way all afternoon. Throughout our conversation, plate after plate appears from the kitchen. Mussels and chorizo in a garlic cream sauce. Fried calamari salad drizzled with a sweet chili sauce. Thai glazed mahi-mahi with rice and snow peas. Each dish is better than the last, and they show a range of techniques and flavors. Longo and his kitchen brigade have kept everything in balance — the heavy cream sauce and delicate mussels, the peppery pop of chilies and the cooling napa cabbage, the rich mahi and simplicity of white rice — on every dish.

"To me, it's all about proper seasoning. If your food is seasoned right, you can taste all the flavors, every component comes to life, and a simple dish — one with only four or five ingredients as opposed to a dish with ten — becomes something special," Longo says.

As the dining public continues to be exposed to more exotic techniques, ingredients and flavors, Longo's approach grows more important. In his two restaurants — Inlet 790, in North Topsail Beach's Villa Capriani, and Beauchaines 211, in Surf City — he works to keep the dishes simple and showcase the flavors of everything on the plate.

"Would I like to do something a little more experimental? A little more flashy? Yes and no," he says. He has no interest in the avant-garde molecular gastronomy side of food, but what he does have an interest in is ingredients. "I want to play more with food we grow and catch around here. Dishes that explore the depth of flavors, from different oysters along our coast, fish caught in our waters, purple sweet potatoes, a different kind of collards, that's what I'm interested in."

Perhaps Longo's interest in keeping it close to home comes from the fact that he's close to home. A Topsail native, he began bussing tables at 12 or 13, working for no pay, just a free meal, until he was 14 and could work in the kitchen.

"After that first job, I never looked back."

After high school, he headed south, to Charleston, South Carolina, and Johnson & Wales. When he was finished there, he moved back home, opening the restaurant at Castle Bay Country Club, then manning the helm of the kitchen in Beauchaines 211 in 2008 and opening Inlet 790 in 2014.

"Growing up here, I surfed, spent every minute I could in, on, and under the water. If I wasn't surfing, I'd be pulling up the crab pots and cooking up a mess."

The day-long surf sessions and evening of picking crabs at a newspaper-covered picnic table are behind him. Now, the occasional round of golf has replaced surfing, and he's traded the crab boil for two of the best restaurants on Topsail, arguably two of the best in the region.

"So when was it you found your key to unlocking food, the salt, the seasoning issue?" I ask.

He thinks about this a minute. "I want to say in school, but it was there when I got to Charleston. I don't know if it's the salt that's in the air and the food here, but I found that the seasoning was essential to coaxing the best flavor out of each ingredient."

After a moment, he says, "I'm lucky to have a great kitchen here and at Beauchaines. My cooks and sous chefs all know how to season. They know how to taste for it, they know how to adjust seasoning and make each dish the best version of itself. There's a sort of telepathy between executive chef and the kitchen, and I'm lucky to have found that."

As if on cue, his executive sous chef and sous chef emerge from the kitchen. They're both wearing wide grins and carrying hot plates. A New York strip drenched in a mushroom-herb butter and a quartet of fingerling potatoes on one; a filet, potato purée and cabernet demi on the other.

When I cut into the steaks, I have three people watching my reactions. Like everything else, the steaks are perfectly seasoned, the sauce and butter ideally paired to accentuate the individual cut of beef, and the potatoes just right to bring it back into balance.

It's the best steak I've ever eaten, I think as I take a bite of one. *It's the best steak I've ever eaten*, I think as I take a bite of the other.

"That's one hell of a steak," I say between bites.

"Yeah," Longo says. "Wait until you try dessert."

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Sweet Chili and Lemongrass Glazed Grilled Mahi-Mahi

(Serves 4)

1 medium shallot (diced fine)
1 stalk roasted lemongrass (green tops removed, pale ends diced fine)
3 cloves garlic (minced)
1/4 cup cilantro (chopped)
2 tablespoons sweet chili sauce
2 tablespoons Sriracha
1 1/2 tablespoon whole grain mustard
2 limes (juiced)
2 tablespoons rice wine vinegar
2 tablespoons honey
2 tablespoons brown sugar
salt and pepper to taste
4 7-oz. portions of mahi-mahi
2 tablespoons olive oil

Combine shallots, lemongrass, garlic, cilantro, sweet chili sauce, Sriracha, whole grain mustard, lime juice, rice wine vinegar, honey, brown sugar and pinch of salt and pepper. Let stand in refrigerator for 2 hours.

Light grill (charcoal if available). When grill is hot, season the mahi portions with olive oil, salt and pepper. Place portions on the grill and let cook for 4 minutes. Flip the mahi and cook for 3 minutes. Glaze the mahi with the sauce and cook for 1 additional minute, or until glaze is warm. *Note: Cooking times may vary depending on thickness of portions.

Serve with sautéed sugar snap peas and jasmine rice, or your favorite sides. Enjoy!

Inlet 790 Grill & Bar is located at 790 New River Inlet Road, North Topsail Beach. Info: (910) 328-0790 or www.inlet790.com

Beauchaines 211 is located at 211 South Topsail Drive, Surf City. Info: (910) 328-1888 or www.beauchaines211.com.

Jason Frye is a travel writer and author of Moon North Carolina *and* Moon NC Coast. *He's a barbecue judge, he rarely naps, and he's always on the road. Keep up with his travels at tarheel-tourist.com.*

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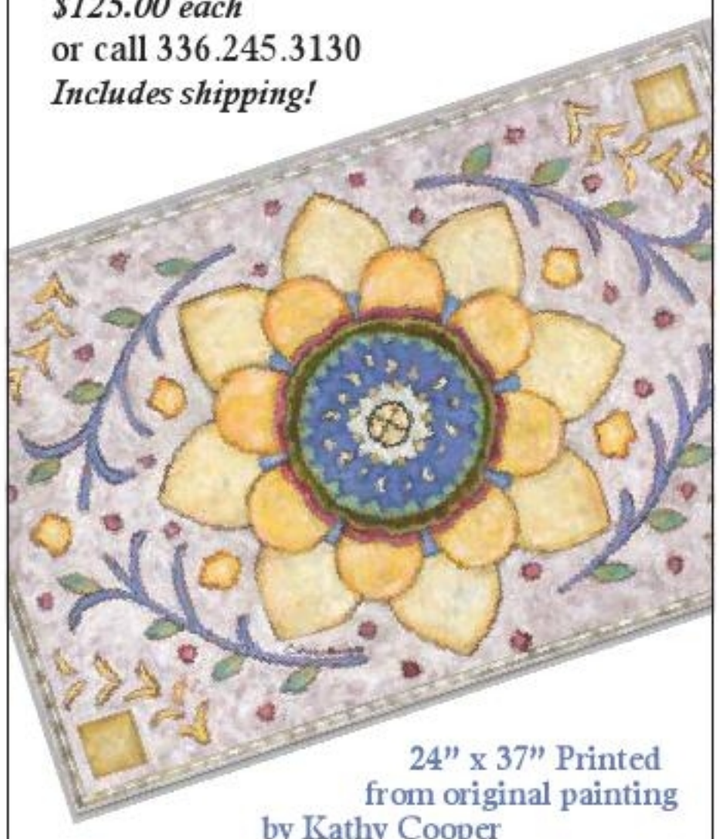

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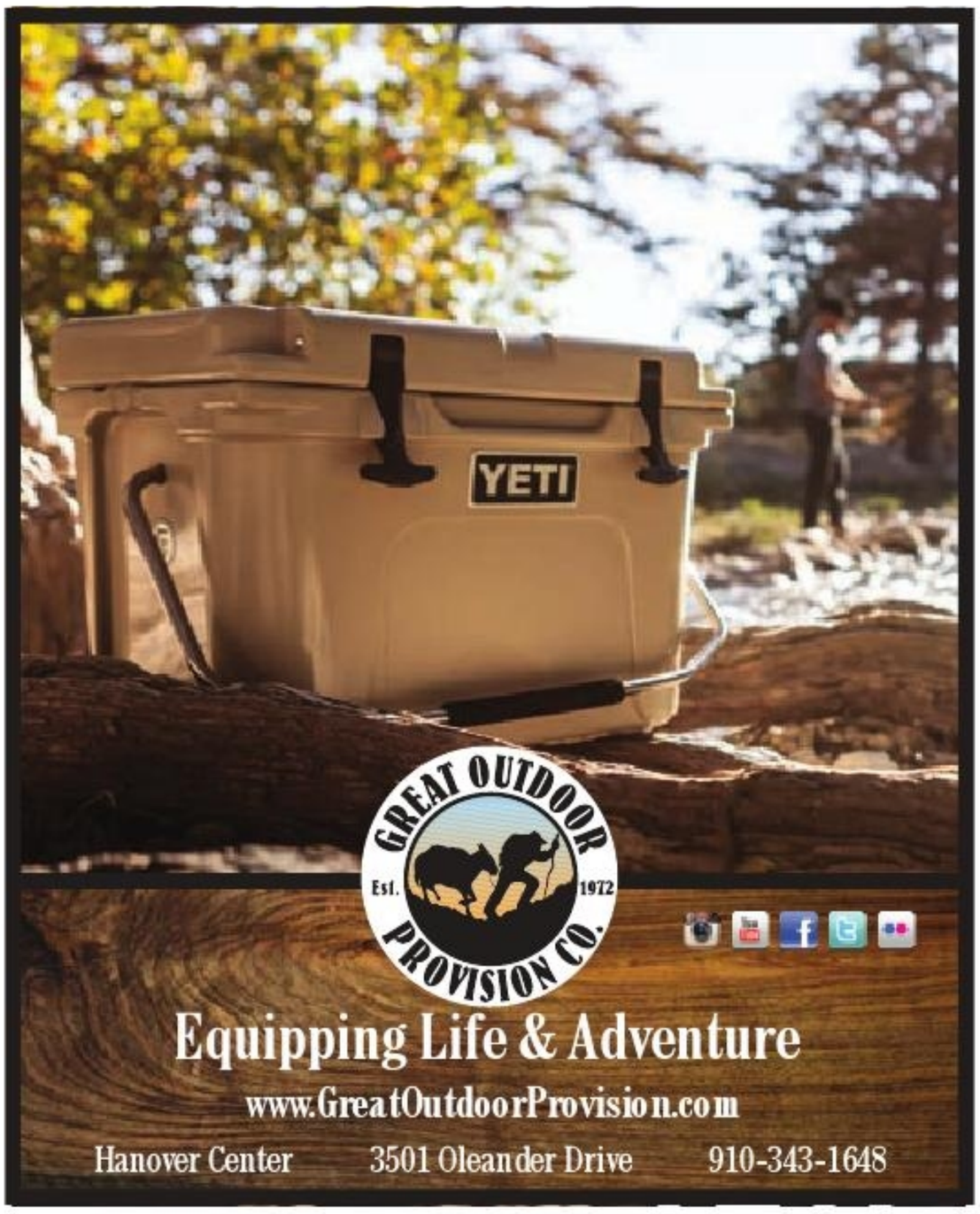

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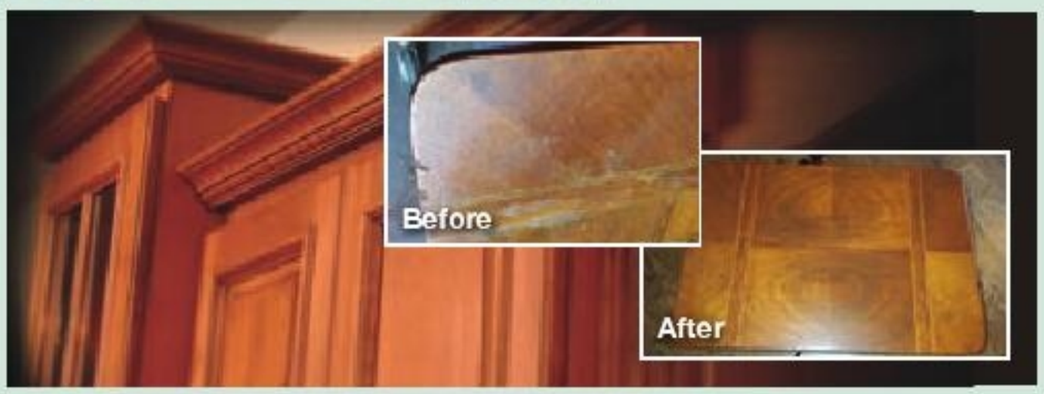

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Brothers in Arms

What did these three World War II combat veterans have to do with the North Carolina Azalea Festival? Pretty much everything!

Billy Rehder

Stan Rehder

Henry Rehder

By Robert Rehder

Pilots called it "The Hump."

Technically it was the "Himalayan Hump," a critical World War II air supply route from Burma over India into China. On Christmas Eve, 1944, high above the Eastern Himalayas bucking a 40-knot cross-wind, Army Air Force Capt. Billy Rehder wrestled the controls of his Curtiss C-46 Commando aircraft slip-sliding in the thin frozen air 25,000 feet above certain death. For Hump pilots, danger lurked from every angle: hurricane winds, darkness, sub-zero temperatures, enemy fire, and jagged 20,000-foot peaks below. You could make rank quickly as a Hump pilot — if you lived long enough.

Five thousand, three hundred miles west, the Christmas spirit was far from festive as Army 2nd Lt. Stan Rehder stood on the deck of the SS *Léopoldville*, a troop ship crossing the English Channel from Southampton, England, to Cherbourg, France. With Lt. Rehder that Christmas Eve were 2,200 men from the 262nd and 264th Regiments of the U.S. 66th Infantry Division sent to reinforce Gen. George Patton's Third Army in France. Just days earlier, elite German SS units had launched a massive offensive on the Western front through the densely forested Ardennes region of Belgium to recapture the port of Antwerp. U.S. forces bore the brunt of the surprise attack known as the Battle of the Bulge, and word spread quickly through the *Léopoldville* of the impending battle. Assigned to escort the *Léopoldville* safely to France were British destroyers HMS *Brilliant*, HMS *Anthony*, HMS *Hotham* and the French frigate *Croix de Lorraine*. Lt. Gerhard Meyer, captain of the German submarine U-486, had other plans for the ill-fated *Léopoldville* that night. U-486 lay submerged five miles off Cherbourg awaiting a target. When the *Léopoldville* came into range at 5:54 p.m., Meyer spoke the murderous order and a torpedo sliced through the frigid water, striking the *Léopoldville* aft on her starboard side. Two hours and forty minutes later the ship sank.

Four hundred and eighty-five miles due north, the liberty ship SS *Dolly Madison* discharged the last of her war cargo at Scotland's northernmost port, Loch Ewe. Whipping down from the Scottish highlands, gale force winds drove a mix of sleet and snow pinging through the ship's wires. Now empty, the massive cargo holds creaked and groaned as the *Madison* rocked at her berth. The 2,500 horsepower reciprocating steam engines chugged online for the upcoming voyage, puffs of steam rising from her stacks. The officer of the watch that Christmas Eve was U.S. Merchant Marine Lt. Junior Grade Henry Rehder, who cast a careful eye over the *Madison's* icy decks awaiting his captain's orders to make ready for sea.

The ship was to proceed around the tip of Scotland, winding her way through the ancient Norse sea lane known as Scapa Flow, then across the English Channel to London's East India Docks. Scapa Flow is where on October 8, 1939, the German submarine U-47 penetrated the Royal Navy base there and sank the battleship HMS *Royal Oak* with a loss of some 900 British sailors. A mariner's nightmare, Scapa Flow is a deceptive maze of sudden shoals, shallows and tidal flats that can wreck a ship and send her crew plunging to their death in freezing waters. Getting torpedoed by a German U-boat wasn't the only way to die in the North Sea.

**

Mention the names Henry, Stan or Billy Rehder to native Wilmingtonians and the association is rarely with their active military service. Invariably the names are linked to a happier time following the war; a renaissance time of the arts in Wilmington; the inception of the North Carolina Azalea Festival; and the unselfish gift of time, talent and hard work the brothers contributed throughout their lives. In stark contrast to World War II, post 9/11 wars are constantly reported from all fronts by multiple correspondents through instantaneous technology. Rarely does the veteran community draw back the curtain of ordinary Americans who fought, sailed and flew missions in faraway lands and over distant seas in World War II to give us a glimpse of the awesome responsibility men and women had to each other, to their personal bravery, their units, and their

country. The Rehder brothers served their country well and then each returned home to serve again—only this time in Wilmington, where all three were instrumental in founding the now-famous Azalea Festival held here each spring.

Though the brothers returned safely from war, each was forever changed in the ways of all combat veterans—ways seen and unseen, spoken and unspoken. Henry sailed liberty ships in three war theaters, Atlantic, Pacific and Mediterranean, where according to the War Shipping Administration, 1,554 commercial ships were sunk due to conditions of war. Billy flew over fifty missions into China and was awarded three battle stars and the Purple Heart for his injuries after crash-landing in the foothills of the Qionglai Mountains of China. Rescued at sea by the HMS *Brilliant* after the sinking of the *Léopoldville*, Stan went on to serve with the 66th in France. He was a fortunate survivor of the *Léopoldville* disaster, which killed 763 of his American shipmates, many of whom drowned or perished from hypothermia in the frigid sea.

Born in Wilmington, the brothers and their older sister, Jessie, were raised at the Rehder family home on North Fifteenth Street. Stan, the youngest of the brothers, was an outdoorsman, woodsman and Eagle Scout who hunted, fished and explored southeast North Carolina. A JROTC cadet in Company C at New Hanover High School, he enrolled at NC State College after graduation and joined the Army ROTC there. As a junior classman, he was called into World War II with his ROTC unit. After returning from the war, Stan completed his studies at NC State and then took ownership of the family wholesale florist business in Wilmington. When the North Carolina Azalea Festival began in 1948, Stan escorted the first queen, actress Jacqueline White. Well-known and respected in Wilmington for his dedication to the festival, he served in many capacities over the years, including president, in 1965.

Even as a youngster, Billy Rehder wanted to be a pilot. After finishing New Hanover High, he graduated from the Boeing School of Aeronautics, specializing in cargo operations. Flying commercial transport planes in California when war came, he joined the Army Air Force and was assigned to the Air Transport Command's 5th Ferrying Group at Love Field, Dallas. He was transferred to the Burma-India-China Wing and soon entered one of the deadliest sectors of the war. The 500-mile flights from India into China were extremely hazardous, over the world's roughest terrain, in unpredictable weather conditions, with poor navigation aids and roving Japanese fighter aircraft. The Burma-India-China Wing of the ATC lost 373 aircraft in World War II and was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation personally by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

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Of the three brothers, Billy Rehder was the quiet one. A talented jazz musician, he played a superb trumpet with Wilmington's premier Dixieland Band of the Lower Cape Fear. Friendly, outgoing and personable, Billy was held in high regard for his life-long work at the festival, where he served as president in 1956.

The oldest of the brothers, Henry, was a trans-oceanic sailor, world traveler, distinguished horti-culturist and a champion of the arts movement in Wilmington. Above all, he was a free spirit. Tall, lanky and handsome, his Southern charm and impeccable manners hid an interesting contrar-ian nature that led him from home to the sea and strange, foreign lands. At the 1936 Berlin Olympics, he watched Hitler snub Jesse Owens, who had humiliated the Germans by becoming the first American to win four track and field gold medals at a single Olympics. In London's West End in 1940, a quiet dinner with famous friends Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt was interrupted by the Wehrmacht Luftwaffe and ended in a scurrying run to the clos-est bomb shelter. In China in 1943, barely escaping the invading Japanese army, he fled from Peking to Shanghai on a Chinese troop train eventually making his way to the Philippine Islands and back to the U.S., where he joined the Merchant Marine. After the war, he returned to Wilmington to take ownership of the family retail florist business. When Henry died at 92, he had been involved with the Azalea Festival for half a century. He chaired the very first committee; was in charge of the floats that first year; and from 1948 to 2003, every queen's itin-erary included a personal tour of his home garden on Oleander Drive.

While the Rehder brothers were all combat veterans, they rarely spoke of war, and perhaps their greatest legacy is defined by accomplishment in the Wilmington community. Businessmen, they used the post-war vogue for flowers and festivals to Wilmington's advantage. Through their own personal dedication, they worked side by side with a network of influential and hard-working leaders, inspiring the community to be involved with the festival. Fun-loving, engaging and humorous, with an enduring love of North Carolina, the Rehders played a critical role in the festival's founding and progress. In 1948, they could hardly have imagined the festival's substantial success or its enormous future economic value for Wilmington. On the of-ficial 2015 website, the festival committee anticipates some 200,000 visitors at several hundred events, marshaled by over 1,000 volunteers with expected net revenue to the festival of over one million dollars.

The Rehder borthers, I think, would be very pleased.

Robert Rehder is a Wilmington native and U.S. Navy veteran. Stan and Billy Rehder were his beloved uncles, and Henry was his father.

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The Short Sweet Reign of Queen Azalea Fifty-Two

By Sydney Penny

This is a tale of the last century, a time nearly lost to memory (to anyone under 18 or heavy drinkers), a time when we feared nothing but computer glitches shutting down the power grid and depriving us of our flattening irons, when coffee shops became churches and churches became coffee shops, when comely ladies wore their hair in the style of Rachel, and "I" and "phone" were still two separate words.

This is the world in which I ruled.

Every year when the pine and oak cast their pollen abroad, covering all in a yellow mist, the city of Wilmington chooses a young woman with clear eyes and uncontested lungs to lead them to welcome spring and its promise of renewal, beauty, fertility and seersucker suits. Lots of 'em.

I took up the scepter in the last year of the millennium and became Queen Azalea Fifty-Two, sovereign ruler of the land generally covered by WECT's broadcast. With a ten-pound crown pinned on my head and an entourage that would make any rapper jealous, my short reign began.

Like Steinbeck's fictional Pippin IV, I was enthroned by committee (not as a target for communist anti-monarchists as far as I know). It's a simple role: the virgin thrown into the volcano as a sacrifice to appease the gods and assure prosperity. Except instead of meeting with a fiery death, I was greeted with smiles and gifts and tremendous hospitality.

Unlike the fictional Pippin IV, I didn't toot around on my motor scooter, however. My retinue and I criss-crossed Wilmington from downtown to Wrightsville Beach escorted by Wilmington's finest, like a sparkling school of yellowfin tuna pursued by a great white shark: the Azalea Festival's famed Winnebago bearing the barons and baronesses of New Liverpool; organizers, strategists and Bloody Mary aficionados.

My recollection of those days is still sharp despite the decade and a half that has passed. Lithe seniors tap dancing. Boxers displaying the result of their relentless training. Belles. Cookies. Hats. Young men in uniform with shiny shoes marching in unison under an oak whose birth only the river remembers. Enjoying fried chicken and sweet tea and cornbread at Airlie Gardens, and bowing out gracefully before the ragged after-party at Dockside. Honoring our fallen soldiers, our modern-day knights, by throwing a wreath on the water with the hope that they would be the last to make the ultimate sacrifice.

Oh, yeah. I also rode an elephant. Bareback. Bet Queen Liz of England never did that.

PHOTOGRAPH CONTRIBUTED BY SYDNEY PENNEY

My days as Queen flew by in a Formosa pink blur. I had little time to establish a nonprofit or play strip billiards as other royals do. Before the azalea blooms had even drooped, I was deposed from my fantastical kingdom and exiled to the distant desert land of Los Angeles, and Wilmington returned to its usual democratic ways.

I was happy to be back to my native land and ditch my satin heels for bare feet. But as I wandered restlessly through my brown- and gray-toned garden in the foothills, I felt a longing. I expected to hear the landscape shout, "Hey, y'all!," but the California flora was as laid back as the human dwellers. The citrus and lavender and sage, glorious though they were, only managed a half-hearted greeting of "Yo. 'sup?"

Then I noticed a solitary azalea bush growing in a corner of the yard. Well-meaning gardeners had shaped it to resemble a green lollipop. A single pale blossom that had evaded decapitation trembled in the spring breeze. Like Napoleon gazing toward France from Elba, catching the scent of Parisian croissants on the Mediterranean breeze, I dreamed of my glorious days as emperor (all three of them).

The lush and glorious landscape! That raucous, rebellious spirit that sprang forth from seed and bulb to make winter seem like nothing more than a bad dream. It was 72 degrees under a cloudless sky in LA (again) and its constancy suddenly seemed like a droning bore, like that gorgeous friend whose lipstick is alway perfect, even after a two-hour champagne lunch at the Ivy. The desire to return to my own personal *Narnia* almost convinced me to clean out the overstuffed armoire in the guest bedroom. Almost.

Ah, but life has a way of shuffling the deck in a most ironic way, doesn't she? Just a few years later, we came back to live in Wilmington, not to dwell in a palace, but in a nice old house with a dozen azalea bushes in the yard. I traded a California Spanish for a Queen Anne Victorian and the City of Angels' fabled traffic for the daily head-on jousting tournament on Market Street.

Now just one of the plain folk, a common Wilmingtonian, I'm more likely to be found standing on my porch, waving at neighbors walking their dogs, than waving from a float. And this year, as Queen Azalea Sixty-Eight and her court fly through the intersection of College and Oleander in a blur of red and blue lights, sirens blaring, that will be me coming out of Trader Joe's with my cookie butter and Two-Buck Chuck.

I can hear Her Majesty now, casting an imperial eye over my Dodgers cap and flip flops: "Oh! Those shoes look so comfortable!"

Sydney Penny is an actress, director and producer with several dozen credits to her name, but she is best known for her work in The Thorn Birds, Pale Rider *and* All My Children. *She is also president of Superstar Academy, a local theater arts education nonprofit. She enjoys gardening, playing tennis and hanging out with her husband, Robert, and son, Chasen.*

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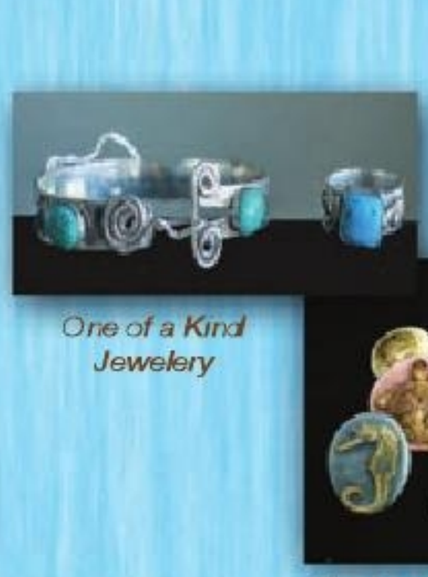
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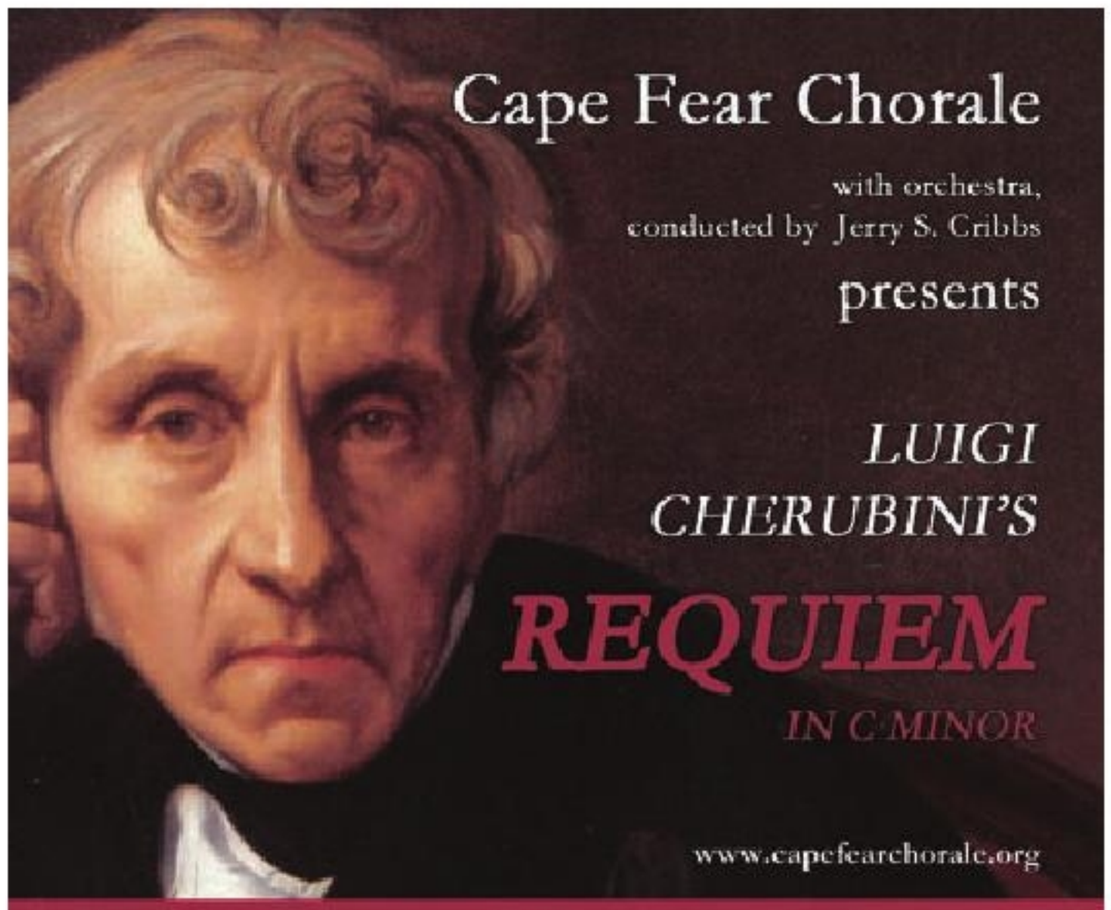

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Port in the Storm

A boy, a pony, an unforgettable image of peaceful friendship

By Bill Thompson

The overly pessimistic weather forecasters predicted that the "tropical depression" would "dump a lot of rain" and produce "potentially dangerous winds." It was actually just a breezy spring rain storm.

On my way back from a luncheon in Morehead City, I stopped for gas at a convenience store somewhere in Carteret County. The rain was still falling, and on the tiny traffic islands in front of the store, the erratic wind created wobbly oleanders, their lavender flowers complemented by contrasting gray sky.

While pumping gas, I noticed across the road a small fenced-in pasture. The fence appeared a weathered gray, the product of many rains and ensuing sunshine. It enclosed an area no larger than fifty square yards. The gray boards and the green grass drew a distinction between the old and the new, a ribbon of gray durability surrounding a green declaration of new growth. The grass was high but losing the growth battle to the weeds that whipped back and forth, up and down, in the wind and steady rain.

At first glance I didn't notice the small shed at the back of the enclosure, but a movement in that direction got my attention. A boy, maybe 12 or 13 years old, had hoisted himself up to sit on the feed box in the back corner of the shed. His companion was a small Shetland pony that had also retreated to the protection of the shed.

The boy was dressed in typical warm-weather garb: a pair of shorts and a T-shirt. He also wore a pair of cowboy boots. The incongruous footwear may have been for protection or because, in a young boy's fantasy world, a cowboy always wears his boots.

The pony's shaggy coat was flattened and wet along the top of his back where the rain had soaked it, and he was standing just under the boy's outstretched legs. When the boy began to rub his boot-clad feet along the pony's back, its short, furry ears lay back on its head as it backed up closer to the boy. They both seemed to be enjoying each other's company, providing a certain amount of mutual comfort as well as protection from the rain.

A neatly trimmed line of boxwoods ran between the fence and the highway. From my point of view across the bushes, I could see only the top of the handle of what appeared to be a lawnmower on the inside of the fence. It was a small push mower, abandoned between the shed and the fence, which ran parallel to the highway.

I began to make some assumptions based on my own boyhood experiences. Apparently, the boy's assignment had been to give the pasture a much-needed mowing. Dutifully, he had begun his task but, as evidenced by the newly mowed path, he had made only one round before seeking refuge with his equine partner. It was probably not an unwelcome situation. Not only had the boy gotten a respite from his chore, but he was also able to share the company of a friend.

I finished pumping gas and started to get back on the road again. As I turned back onto the highway, I could see clearly the scene in the little shed at the back of the pasture across the road. There was the boy, sitting on a feed box, leaning back into the corner of the building; his arms folded across his chest; chin down and eyes closed. It was a most remarkable, tranquil scene: the image of the boy, his legs straight out in front of him, his feet on the back of the pony, which was standing very still with his shaggy head hanging drowsily. It was a portrait of two friends resting safely in each other's company as the rain and the wind swirled around them.

Bill Thompson is a speaker and author who lives just down the road, in nearby Hallsboro.

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White Ibis

Wading the shallows, more beautiful as the days lengthen

PHOTOGRAPH BY LINDSAY ADDISON

By Susan Campbell

Those long red legs. That long, curved bill. When you spot an ibis, you know it – although it's rare to see just one ibis on the landscape. These large wading birds feed in small flocks, heads down, probing water or mud for their next morsel. Two types can be found here: glossy ibis, which are all-dark, and white ibis, white with black wing tips. They can be confused with no other bird in coastal North Carolina.

White ibis can, however, be found a good ways inland most of the year. Most often associated with shallow fresh or brackish water brimming with invertebrates, tadpoles or small frogs, white ibis may also be found around larger lakes or flooded fields. Occasionally, they turn up on wet playing fields or golf courses. Their incredibly sensitive bills can detect prey items six inches or more below the surface.

Before the evening fades to darkness, ibis will flock to traditional roosting areas by the hundreds, ornamenting large trees over water. Such sites are generally safe from predators, except, perhaps, the great horned owl.

White ibis breed exclusively along the immediate coastline. Here in North Carolina, they congregate in large numbers, mixed with egrets and herons, on dredge spoil islands where there are few – if any – terrestrial predators. By late March, adults will undergo an obvious transformation, becoming more colorful with the increasing day length. As breeding season approaches, blood flow to their extremities improves, causing their legs, bill and facial skin to become bright red. Males tend to be more brightly colored than females, and will also develop a swollen gular pouch at the throat. This swelling accentuates vocalizations that advertise territory and, of course, helps the ibis attract a mate. Like all wading birds, the ibis makes a variety of grunting noises paired with body language to communicate.

Nests, in which small sticks are arranged like platforms for two or three splotched eggs, are constructed by the pair in low shrubs or on matted vegetation. The female incubates the eggs for about three weeks, but both parents will feed their young. Immature birds who leave the nest after about one month are gray-brown but will acquire their characteristic plumage over the course of their first winter.

Battery Island, located at the mouth of the Cape Fear, hosts the largest congregation of white ibis in the state – one of nineteen sites used by colonial breeding birds and managed by Audubon North Carolina. The Cape Fear Audubon Society occasionally offers a springtime tour for bird lovers to experience this breathtaking spectacle. Contact the Coastal Audubon office at (910) 686-7527 for more information.

On Sunday, June 7, from 10:30 a.m. – 3:45 p.m., a cruise of the Lower Cape Fear Bird Islands will benefit the Audubon North Carolina's Sanctuary Program. Bring your camera and binoculars to view nesting areas of many coastal water birds, including white ibis. Tickets and more information: nc.audubon.org/events/bird-islands-cruise-0.

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos. She can be contacted by email at susan@ncaves.com.

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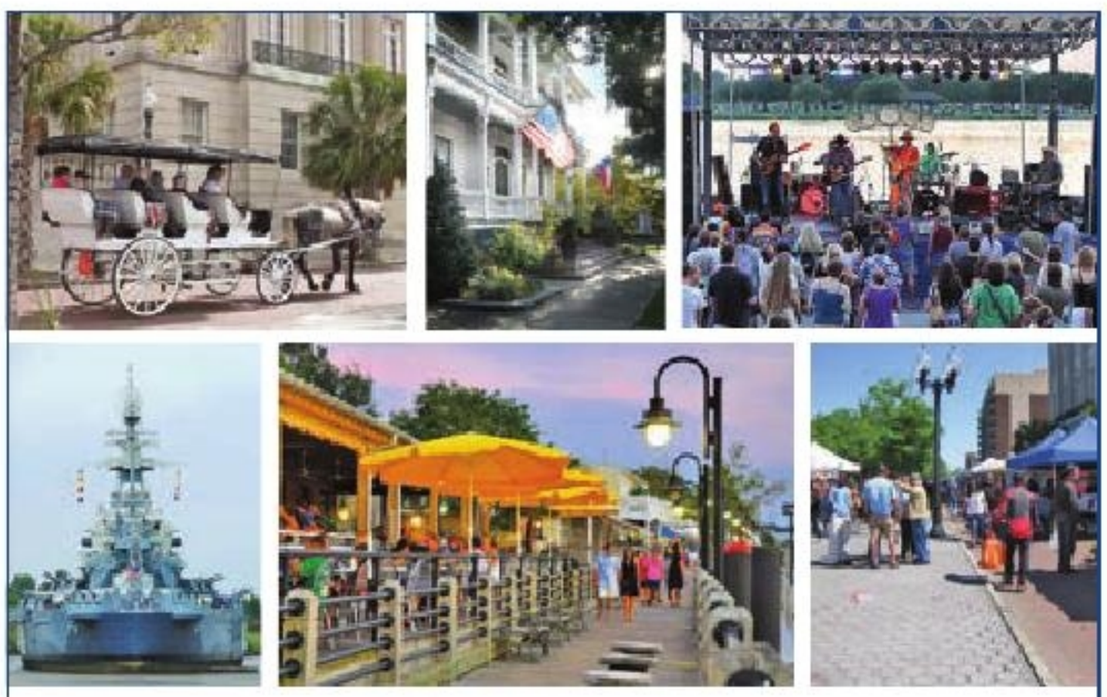

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The Power of We

Two old friends and NBA journeymen reunite in Charlotte for a season-ending run

By Wiley Cash

The 2015 NBA All-Star weekend just wrapped in New York City without a single player from the Charlotte Hornets appearing in any of the main events. The closest the Hornets got to All-Star status was second year center Cody Zeller starting for the USA team in the Rising Stars Challenge. While league royalty LeBron James, Russell Westbrook and Stephen Curry dunked, shot and skilled their way further into popularity, the Hornets were back home in Charlotte resting their legs and focusing their minds on the remainder of the season. At least I hope that's what they were doing.

With thirty games remaining on their schedule, the Hornets are 22–30 and sitting in a vulnerable seventh spot in the Eastern Conference standings, just above the Miami Heat, who are also at 22–30. Hopefully, the Hornets' best play is ahead of them, and hopefully the Heat's worst play is still to come, but after the trade deadline, that may be wishful thinking.

The Heat just traded for veteran guard Goran Dragic, who after seven years of back and forth between the Phoenix Suns and Houston Rockets is finally hitting his stride as a pro. He's one of the most exciting guards in the league, and he'll add firepower and bravado to the Heat's roster, especially considering that the team's nucleus of Dwyane Wade, Chris Bosh, Luol Deng and Mario Chalmers is still intact.

The Hornets, on the other hand, aren't quite as intact: Kemba Walker, the team's leader in points, assists, minutes and steals, underwent surgery for a tear of the lateral meniscus in his left knee in late January, and the team suddenly found itself without its on-court leader and spark plug who got the season off to an incredible start with a game-winning overtime bucket against the Milwaukee Bucks. On a positive note, the Hornets did something that most Hornets/Bobcats teams of yesteryear probably wouldn't have done: They held steady, going 4–4 since Walker's last game on January 23. There's hope that Walker will return to the court by March 16 for a West Coast swing, but until then the Hornets must find a way to stay afloat.

That's where guard Mo Williams comes into play. A twelve-year, six-team veteran, Mo Williams arrives in Charlotte via trade with the Minnesota Timberwolves, where he averaged 5 assists, 3 rebounds, and 13 points per game this season, including a career-high 52 points against Indiana on January 13. It's still unknown whether Williams will start at point guard or come off the bench to back up Brian Roberts, but one thing is clear: The Hornets need Williams to play well, and to play well immediately.

Although most of the NBA's veteran journeymen are consummate professionals, I've often wondered how difficult it is to join a team at mid-season and give everything you've got for a cause that is only recently your own. Perhaps this transition will be a little easier for Mo Williams when he looks to pass the ball down low and sees his best friend, Al Jefferson, waiting with his back to the basket and his hands open wide. Williams and Jefferson have been friends for fifteen years, meeting first when Jefferson was an eighth-grade AAU standout whose coach would regularly take him over to a high school in Jackson, Mississippi, where a star named Mo Williams was electrifying crowds. The two men spent the 2012–13 season together with the Utah Jazz, where they cemented their friendship. After Williams joined the Hornets for his first practice with the team, it was apparent that he and Jefferson are excited to play together again.

"Mo is a professional," said Jefferson. "He is the guy that can help us with the leadership in the locker room and some of the scoring."

Williams sang Jefferson's praises as well. "He is, in my opinion, the best low-post scorer at his position," he said. "You have to show him attention and double-team him. If you don't double-team him, he is going to score. I think I complement his game in terms of being able to knock down that open 3 when they do double him."

Hopefully, these two old friends will gel as well as they're imagining. While often panned as the weaker of the two conferences, the East will be a dogfight going down the stretch. While the top of the conference, led by the Atlanta Hawks and the Toronto Raptors, is relatively fixed, the bottom half is a free-for-all with the Hornets, Heat, Nets, Celtics, Pistons and Pacers all separated by three games or less. Even at this point in the season, it's nearly impossible to predict how the playoff picture will shake out, but if the playoffs started today, the Hornets would be facing the surprisingly good Toronto Raptors, who rank fifth in the league in scoring, which means the Hornets would need a couple of big games from Mo Williams. Hopefully he's up to the challenge.

On how he sees himself fitting with the Hornets as they try to hold on to their playoff spot and potentially make a late season push, Williams said, "I'm excited about getting that adrenaline going and playing for something. They have a chance to be really good."

Make that a "we," Mr. Williams. We have a chance.

Wiley Cash is a New York Times *best-selling author whose second novel,* This Dark Road to Mercy, *was released last year. He lives in Wilmington.*

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A Forest Hymn

On early walks through the wild, a kind of faith is found

By Virginia Holman

As a girl, I was always eager to get my Sunday School lessons done as Easter approached. I wasn't alone; the meaning of the holiday was lost on many of the 10-year-olds who gathered in the dusty, light-filled room to sing and memorize Bible passages in my small-town Baptist church. Easter routinely made me cry, not out of pity at the Crucifixion or joy at the Resurrection, but from the pure terror I felt viewing the paintings of the Road to Calvary in our illustrated children's Bible. The boys in the class didn't help matters with their vivid interpretations of tortured suffering. I didn't understand it then, but I wanted to flee the idea that people could hurt one another so cruelly, and that I lived in that world. At the time, it seemed an impossible notion. I simply longed for our dismissal.

Outside, after church, my friend Carol and I could take off our white nylon gloves and Sunday shoes and roam her family's land. We'd hang out in a tar paper tepee her father built beside his ice skating pond, a rare thing in coastal Virginia. One of Carol's four sisters had wanted to learn to ice skate when she was little, so their father, fond of grand gestures, hand-dug a three-foot-deep pond about half the size of a football field. Each winter it froze for a few weeks, and the neighboring kids would gather to borrow skates from the jumbled, battered collection her grown sisters had left behind. We'd skate until our hands and feet were numb, until the sun turned the top of the pond to slush and some unlucky soul broke through and had to walk five acres, soaked and shivering, to filch some dry clothes from Carol's house.

By April, the pond had melted. Soon it would fill with spawning frogs, then tadpoles. So as spring neared, we tramped. In the fields, the sun was warm on our heads, but the paths through the woods were still dark and cold enough that we could glimpse our breath. Ground that was frozen hard as brick just weeks earlier softened and the smell of fresh black topsoil under the pine tags filled the air — an aroma that would linger like a low hanging fog until the first days of summer. We'd roll over old logs, hunting for beetles or sleeping snakes, and lift the pale white weeds and thin roots that veined the ground. We stalked rabbits by walking as silently as possible, hoping to snag one by its long ears. We were fortunate never to catch one, because what then? I think we knew at some level that we had no business determining the fate of a living creature as an entertainment, even if we held that power.

At the end of the trail was an old dock, and beyond it a vast marsh led to the glittering bay. Carol called it the boat graveyard, and indeed, that's what it was. By some agreement, her father allowed for decades of old wooden fishing boats to come to rest here. Any components had long been salvaged, and the boats were warped and half sunk, covered in barnacles and paint blisters, the interiors littered with snake sheds and old birds' nests, a reliquary that made some sense to me. I liked to imagine fixing up one of the old boats and taking it far out in the ocean, like my uncle did, like my great-grandfather — who, I am told, could taste the water and predict a storm still days away. I hoped his gift was the sort of thing passed down in the blood, and that I too could notice the smallest shifts in the environment, to predict danger far enough in advance to avoid it. I wanted to become so fused to this place that I knew its cells — its history, its stories, everything that was possible to know — until I was woven into the story of my family's community forever.

We talked a lot about God on those walks: what she believed, what I believed, or thought I believed. How did anyone make sense of this life? The world was a puzzle that kept expanding, which was both thrilling and terrifying. Carol took the world on faith. What her parents believed, she also believed. What our preacher said, she took as fact. I had too many doubts about the goodness of people to believe I could ever find my answers from them, but I see now that observing the shift from winter to spring, when the stark and dead world returned to a place of life, was a truly holy experience, or holy enough for me. I must have sensed that back then; after one of those Sunday walks, I went home and wrote a poem. Then I set it to music, like a small, primitive hymn. I sang it quietly to myself, and to the forest, and who knows, maybe even to God.

Author Virginia Holman teaches in the creative writing department at UNC Wilmington and occasionally guides with Kayak Carolina.

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Mama's Garden

Across the road, the rows
of butterbeans, the turnip bed,

strung peavines on tobacco twine,
faint green on white.

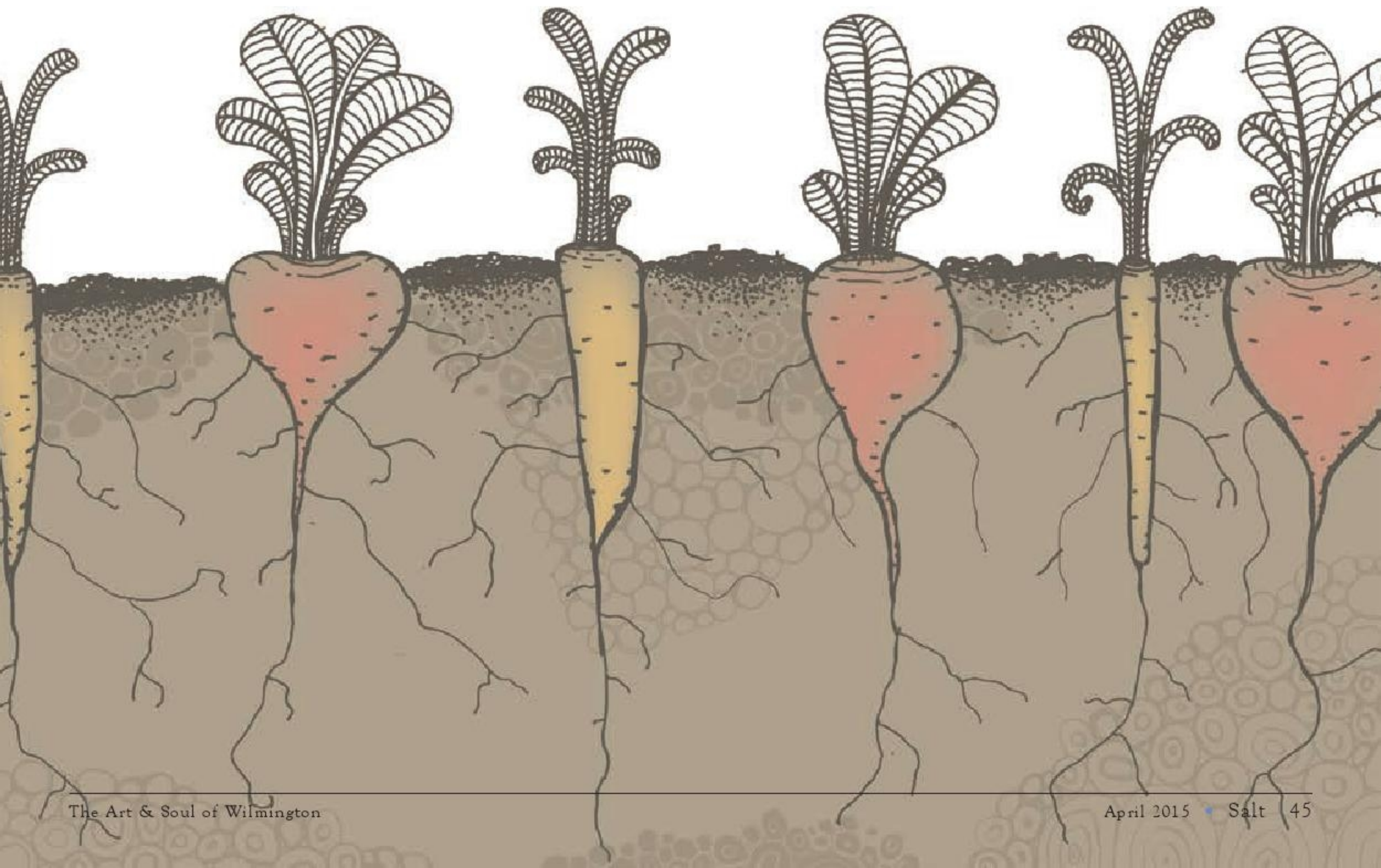
The collards shine.
Sevin Dust showers

the buds; the Cat's Paw
her shoe-heel stamps a tattoo on

the plot she stoops over
and shows her hem to the cukes and squash

the green grass snake
balances without difficulty.

– *Shelby Stephenson*



Photographs by John Gessner

Memories of a Poetic Barnstormer

The friends of Shelby Stephenson, North Carolina's new poet laureate, finally have their say

By Stephen E. Smith

Shelby Stephenson, North Carolina's new poet laureate, and I have been friends for forty years. We met in the mid-'70s at a gathering of the NC Writers' Conference in Southern Pines. At the time, we were both publishing in literary magazines and in a year or two our first books appeared. During the next twenty years, we did what the late James Dickey called "barnstorming for poetry," traveling across the state to give readings and entertaining audience, large and small, with an occasional Hank Williams tune. After all that hanging out together, I came to think of Shelby as family, a brother. So I find myself in the position of having too much to tell. Half a lifetime of shared experience doing what we love is simply incommunicable. But, ah, me, the stories we could tell. . . .

When Shelby and his wife, Linda, moved to Johnston County, we exchanged the occasional email or phone call, and we saw each other at poetry gatherings. But I've never felt compelled to write or call to discuss the state of the world or even the trifling difficulties we've experienced in our lives. I instinctively know what Shelby feels and thinks; there's no need to discuss it. One truth I will share – Shelby Stephenson has made me laugh a thousand times. What more can one expect from a heart-wise brother? Beyond that, I'll let my betters bear witness:

Clyde Edgerton is the author of twelve books of prose. He teaches at UNCW.

In the fall of 1977, I started teaching in the education department at Campbell College, and over the Christmas break I wrote my first short story but didn't tell anybody. I immediately stumbled onto the poetry of Shelby Stephenson, who was teaching across campus in the English department. Shelby's poetry rang a bell – there was the language and places and people of my rural NC upbringing. I met Shelby and lo, another bell was rung. Here was a man who talked the language I grew up with, but especially: He wrote it. He (and Mark Twain) helped me understand that that language was not only worthy, but precise, musical and precious in a way that does not have to be cloying and cute.

Shelby and I started jogging together during our time on campus. I had put together another short story or two but didn't have the confidence to talk to anyone about my secret writing. We ran along a long dirt road and I finally felt comfortable enough with this real live poet, this bright-eyed, warm, let-me-tell-you-something-and-then-you-tell-me-something new friend – finally felt comfortable enough to say, "I've written a few short stories."

Shelby was all over my new venture. I was knocked down with his generosity. What new writer could ask for anything more than a (slightly) older writer to show intense interest in his or her work? Shelby asked to read a story, critiqued it, told me where to send it (*The Lyricist*) and then mentored me and supported me during my first years of writing fiction. He got me my first publication.

I was also just starting to play banjo and Shelby played guitar, and he and Nin, his wife, knew all the old songs. Here was somebody I could listen to, talk to, and sing with. I found Shelby at the right time for me – as untold new writers have found him. We have been so lucky to have his encouragement, his music – just as the world is lucky to have his poetry.

Sally Buckner is the author of *Strawberry Harvest* and editor of *Word and Witness: 100 Years of North Carolina Poetry.*

Every time a new state poet laureate is announced, North Carolina's literary community responds, usually with deep enthusiasm. Who wouldn't respond favorably when Sam Ragan, once dubbed North Carolina's Literary Godfather, takes the office? Or Fred Chappell, who has garnered a wallful of state and national literary awards? Or Kathryn Stripling Byer, who brought to life the voices of lonesome mountain women as well as modern citizens trying to come to terms with racism? Or Cathy Smith-Bowers, with an enviable record of national publication? Or Joseph Bathanti, who has dedicated much of his professional life to giving voice to those too often voiceless: prisoners, the homeless, abused spouses?

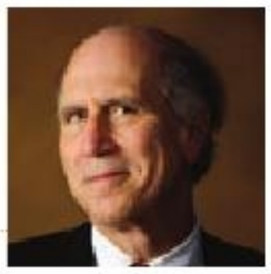
So when Shelby Stephenson was named as our newest poet laureate, the hills and valleys (and Facebook and email) across the state fairly rang with unalloyed approval. "Shelby is North Carolina's Homer!" enthused one voice. Kevin Watson, publisher, commented that "Shelby has the spirit of North Carolina coursing through his veins." Kathryn Stripling Byer: "Shelby gives voice to his place and its people and does so unashamedly, with passion and precision, and, yes, with real country music." Poet Nancy Dillingham, "Yes, so deserved — such an unassuming, dedicated writer."

Such accolades are not unexpected for one who has just been awarded one of his state's highest honors (as well as the N.C. Award for Literature in 2001 and, last fall, induction into the N.C. Literary Hall of Fame). Less expected were the dozens of comments flooding email and Facebook, phrased in different ways, but all translating into Hooray! Shelby's just such a darned good guy!

As one who has been honored to count Shelby a friend since we enjoyed dinner at the Southern Pines home he shared with his wife, Linda, more than thirty years ago, I can heartily second that acclamation. Since the other guests included writers, too — Fred and Susan Chappell, Stephen Smith, Anna Wooten-Hawkins and Tom Hawkins — naturally the conversation often centered on writing. But without an ounce of ego, just a shared love of language and the way it flourishes in this, which novelist Doris Betts termed, "the writingest state." I had already read Shelby's hog killing poems, knew how he preserved the dailiness of life in his native Benson. And his prose poem *Recognition* offers lines which could serve as his creed:

"I'm an ordinary man. I am with you in the shade . . . . My frayed feelings swell and swallow up the least utterance reaching out where the road and the water move together."

Indeed.



Joseph Bathanti is the author of seven books of poetry and four books of prose. He served as North Carolina Poet Laureate 2012–2014.

Last year, around this time, while I was still the poet laureate of North Carolina, I was asked by Kevin Watson to supply a blurb for *Fiddledeedee*, Shelby Stephenson's extraordinary series of psalm-like lyrics — what Grace Cavalieri, in her 2002 interview with Shelby, called a "book-length opera" — that Press 53 so beautifully reissued under its imprint this fall.

In contemplating my task, I realized that Shelby's voice — the sound and pitch, the love that beats so steadily for everything in it — rings steadily in my head, that I conjure it at will when I write, that it travels with me, as it does with anyone with whom he comes in contact. I realized as well how much he and his poems — how much he and Linda, their marriage and the literal music that marriage has produced — has meant to me since I first met him about thirty years ago at Saint Andrews College in Laurinburg. How kind he was; how kind he remains. This is what I said in my blurb and it strikes me now in the wake of Shelby's appointment as North Carolina's new poet laureate as almost clairvoyant.

"Shelby Stephenson can walk out his back door — even in his sleep, it seems, so tithed to the land is his subconscious — and see what lies hidden before our very eyes: in the roods and plow-soles, the tree bark and creek beds, in his beloved spectra ancestors forever singing in his head. He writes about the mystery of the dirt — what it yields, what it reclaims — with more precision and prescience than any poet I can think of. I can hear him now, whispering his sacramental litany, his invocation: 'it is nothing but a song — the long journey home.' *Fiddledeedee* is Shelby at his best. Blessed be his wholly liturgical verse — the bard, the very voice, of North Carolina."

Blurbs are notoriously hyperbolic, but I do not think I exaggerated a bit. If anything, I held back. What I did not say, but I think is implicit, as clear as his poems, is that he was born to be North Carolina's poet laureate. Born in a plank house, the son of tobacco farmers, Paul and Maytle Stephenson of western Johnston County — we will never have another poet laureate so steeped in the lore and history and sacrosanctity of our soil — he truly is the voice of North Carolina, its psalmist, if you will

Shelby and I unbelievably enough spent two or so years together in Pittsburgh, the town I was born and grew up in. While I was in the seventh and eighth grades at Sacred Heart School, a little less than two miles down the avenue, he was studying for his master's degree in English literature at the University of Pittsburgh, my one-day alma mater, in 1966 and '67.

Our paths surely would have crossed. In fact, I would follow in his footsteps, receiving some years later my master's in English literature from Pitt and inexplicably come under the spell of Shelby's favorite professor there, Harry J. Mooney, my favorite as well.

In an email, some years back, Shelby said: "Harry Mooney was something out of this world and in it . . . I'm not sure I ever told him I took a sophomore English course with Dan Patterson at Chapel Hill and we got to Faulkner and Patterson said — the subject was *The Bear* — 'Here's a handout: Go home and paste it in your bathroom, right where you'll see it — this genealogy of the McCaslin family — and study it.' I did that and what he no doubt intended did not take. I hardly knew what a bathroom was . . . I was bored to know anything how the family might fit in his — Patterson's — longing to teach me. With Mooney all that clicked right in. Snug. And I was old enough — I had left AT&T and courting Nin, this was 1966 — and I could feel Mooney's vibes: Family's almost everything. [Harry J. Mooney's] patience I won't forget. To teach like that."

I felt Shelby's "vibes" before I even met him, apprenticing unwittingly to him, lo, nearly half a century ago on the streets of Pittsburgh — and now, today, in our second shared home, North Carolina. I will not forget his patience and, ah yes, "to teach like that," to teach like Shelby.

Marsha Warren was director of the NC Writers' Network from 1987–1996. In 1991 she joined the Paul Green Foundation and serves as its director.

Anyone who has "experienced" Shelby knows what I'm about to say. His mind is a miracle without conventional filters. He allows himself to think widely and wildly and often about old times. His thought process is so unique that a mundane thing, like asking him, as director of the Paul Green Foundation, to be on a conference call with other trustees, turns into a colorful story from his life—"Just put in the code, Shelby, and you'll be connected . . . "

"Sounds like a winner to me: When I learned to drive I drove a Farmall Cub and I put it in 3rd gear instead of first and I hit a post which held up the tobacco barn shelter. I await the time I try to make the conference call.

"We got a party line when I was 14. I had never talked on a telephone. One day at school our principal Mr. Woodlief called me in his office. I was scared. He told me I had a phone call and handed me the phone and I said Hello in the wrong end. He said, 'Shelby, turn it around.' And in a day or so Jerry Johnson who lived across the creek called me and said, 'Shelb, I've got to blow the dust out of this party line—could you lay your end in the trash can.' And for a split I thought he was serious.

"About that Cub—we had mules until I was in the seventh grade—as long as we had the Cub the tie-rod on the right front wheel was bent. Oh, Oh, Oh. And my main brother Paul went from the Cub to bigger tractors and finally started Stephenson's Bar-B-Q in 1958."

Shelby pulls out the Southern in me. Although I was born and raised in Ohio, my parents were from Kentucky and West Virginia. Then when we moved to North Carolina fifty-four years ago, it felt like I was coming home in a way and Shelby and his poetry have kept me here. I said his mind is a miracle and thus his writing. How fortunate we are to have him share his life through his writing with the great state of North Carolina as its poet laureate.

"[The family] lived for 14 years in the Plankhouse—all my early memories in it and around it. So that's why Nin and I restored it. The brick house was built in '52. Year road was paved. Governor Scott, we all said, paved the road. Year Hank was to die at the end of 1952. I learned poems from his songs: 'I'm so Lonesome I Could Cry,' 'Cold Cold Heart,' 'Your Cheating Heart,' 'I Saw the Light,' and so on. He wrote hundreds. Sang from pain. Died at 29."

We're all in for a wild and wonderful ride for the next two years.

Fred Chappell is the author of more than 30 books of prose and poetry. He served as NC Poet Laureate 1997–2002.

Kevin Watson at Press 53 is reissuing Shelby Stephenson's first collection, *Fiddledeedee*. Now at the time of Shelby's installation as poet laureate of North Carolina, this is a most auspicious event. His very first book shows this poet at full throttle, hitting the notes high and hard and lonesome, celebrating the glories that attend his powers.

Here is the tale that Kevin said Shelby told. Shelby and I were present at some literary do in Atlanta and he came to my room and read aloud the first seventeen pages of that inaugural book. When he asked for my reaction I am supposed to have replied, "Why me, O Lord?"

Never happened. That's our boy telling a tale, a folktale, in fact, the kind he likes best. Shelby is folk. He writes me notes complaining that the latest issue of *Poetry* magazine has no martins in it. I suppose these days he is giving them a pass on tobacco worms, but maybe he is letting them off too easy. We have all sorts of poets in our state of every degree of sophistication, book learning, and street smarts. But the bedrock of our literary geology is folk material and Shelby makes certain we don't forget that fact. If he doesn't want us to get above our raisin', it's because he knows that if we do, we're lost.

With Shub as laureate, I'm certain that we're not lost.

Jaki Shelton Green is the author of *Dead on Arrival*, *Conjure Blues*, *Singing A Tree Into Dance*, *Breath of the Song*, *Feeding the Light*. In 2014 she was inducted into the NC Literary Hall of Fame.

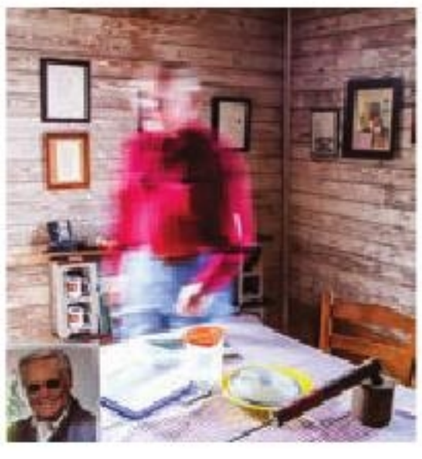
"The more closely the author thinks of why he wrote, the more he comes to regard his imagination as a kind of self-generating cement which glued his facts together, and his emotions as a kind of obscure designer of those facts. Reluctantly, he comes to the conclusion that to account for his book is to account for his life."

– Richard Wright

Shelby shows up in my life as the uncle or older cousin visiting for Sunday dinner bringing gifts that bear witness to our shared "Southern sensibilities." One day Shelby called me to talk about the story of *July, the Slave girl*. I was privileged and humbled to sit and listen to the whispers beneath ancestral floorboards and the rattling of coffin nails.

I am grateful for our friendship which continues to teach me how our stories are beautifully juxtaposed and strike a graceful note *together*. His poetry educates through its rare combination of deep erudition, vivid prose, and profound humanity. By giving breath to *July*, Shelby weaves intricate mosaics of narrative that ultimately becomes about betrayal and the complex moral landscape of internal war.

Shelby Stephenson has shown me through this journey with *July* how to inspire, conjure dignity, and how to remain open and honest to the solace that comes when the story holds us accountable. These are lessons I cherish in my friendship with Shelby as we stand for more and more possibilities of story that nudge our profound understanding of how alive the past can be.



A SPRING Garden *of* Verse

The House We Never Built

Headlights reveal a skeleton of branches
and fence line, an overrun pasture. A thrush's
jukebox of songs. Imagine a station wagon
pulling to the perimeter, Dad cutting
the engine. Get out with us and sling your elbows
across the metal gate. My father is a small-town
realtor, and this, how we spend Sundays.

Valleys like hammocks in the distance. No one
has found this tract yet. Lean close, and you'll hear dusk
sow the new pines, blow the bugle of a flame azalea.
The wild azalea croodle in a would-be buyer's ear:
dormer windows, wrap-around porch, heirloom tomatoes.

Look, that sheet on the line is light setting sail
across the green sea. Soon the monarchs will migrate
up from Mexico, Dad rehearses, and even my mother
can't help secreting a yellow farmhouse
from his glossy brochure and tucking it inside her
wallet behind the Gulf card and school pictures.

But for now my sister and I content ourselves
scouting for a box turtle, an orb weaver like a pendant
across a tree's collarbone, that fertile place
where all longing begins: beneath the field mint
growing along the far wall of childhood.

We haven't reached the part when our parents close
the door to our brick ranch behind them, disappear
into the mosquito truck's fog, suburbia, bills,
and leave us to tend this imagined home.

For years still, my sister and I will huddle
patiently in the back seat as our mother
pumps gas or runs some errand, then unclasp
her wallet and slip the paper house from its pocket,
pass it between cupped hands like a thin, pulsing secret
that could easily fly away.

– *Emily Smith*

Spring

Of course the peepers —
thumb green frogs
who climb trees calling
for what? Spring.
They sing so loud
they shake the air,
trees loosen, sky folds
in bolts of blue
blue, blue.
Between their delicate
fingers, little paws,
wrinkled back, they confound
the season. Never
stymied by that universal
pull between tomorrow
and night, they sing.

– *Ruth Moose*

Rain

In the night, rain on the roof
and all I love
safe in their sleep.

Long ago, I had a lover
who didn't like the rain.
He lives in Arizona now:

dry spells, then torrents
rushing through the canyons,
flooding cobbled streets,

danger and excitement
in wet minutes, steam
and aridity after.

So, too, with hurricanes —
wind-swept torrents,
banging and thudding

as tree limbs fall, garden gnomes
crash into cars
and windows shatter.

But ordinary rain, gentle
and insistent, mutes
other sounds, inviting sleep,

washes out a day's cares,
nighttime fears,
comforts the sheltered.

– Judith Behar

Gone

I miss the day lilies.
During their brief fling
they flaunt their beauty
like a strumpet
in tangerine skirt
calling attention to herself:
"Look at me, look at me."
Each slender green bud
unfolds at the invocation
of the feverish sun.
It infuses each blossom
with enough heady color
to last just one glorious day.
Now the roadsides, unadorned,
seem faded and bereft.

– Nancy Gotter Gates

Garden Victory

In the heat of the day
I'm brought to my knees
by a taunting hobo weed
tossing its shaggy head
between the caged tomatoes
and high-strung pole beans.

I yank its scrubby top
and its taps dig in
clutching the earth
with stubborn resolve.
We struggle in heated skirmish
until at last, with a renting squeak
it yields a vanquished root ball.

I hold up my routed foe,
its roots like an old goat's beard,
and the pole beans rustle a cheer
and the sun lays its heavy hand
upon my back in praise
for a clear garden victory.

– Valerie Macon

Backyard Battleground

My backyard is a battlefield of flowers,
the blossoms to each other most unkind.
They fight for pride of place among the bowers
so I can't cultivate my peace of mind.

They clearly spite my nurturing intentions
by feeding well while growing more headstrong
as I endure their riotous pretensions
and ask, Why can't we all just get along?

Perhaps their green is nature imitating
our drive to strive relentlessly for gain
with artful guile so oft intimidating
and leave each other caught out in the rain.

By May if I don't see a truce bouquet
I'll let the rampant kudzu have its way.

– Walt Pilcher

Spring Sonata

Windowed I watch the jonquils hesitate
between green time and the golden act,
myself uneasy with the old impact
of memories their bright spears incarnate.
Desire from recollection buds — how sate
the seasonal upsurge to reenact
spring's orgies, how hoard my heart intact?
Perennial love springs early, wisdom late.

The winter heart bulbs rich beneath the frost,
swelled by the rotting stalks of other years,
rounding the ancient contour of its power
from the eternal cycle of loves lost.
Let me not anguish if my spring yet bears
the periodic fever of a flower.

–Ann Deagon

A Time Returned

Oh, Mr. Eliot, you are wrong.
April is not the cruelest month.
It is a time of lilacs remembered
with delight and desire,
the redolence of hyacinths
that takes us to a place
where we know nothing,

And yet from winter's memory
all this comes,
for who but those in winter
can appreciate love
without its trappings
of lace and pearls?
Who but those in winter
no longer sigh
at sudden frosts?

And who but those in winter
savor days and know
that Aprils do not last?

– Cynthia Strauff Schaub

Mapping

Every spring she must have seen them returning,
mottled green and marching from deep in the forest
up to the stilts her pale pink house stood on,

even as she kept planting closer to woods' edge,
out from her husband's daylilies, rallying sunlight,
toward the bamboo thicket where medicine bottles

surfaced in earth. Was she surprised as I am
to find the trillium, surfacing too each year?
I follow her paths past bushy azalea and privet,

countless snowdrops, daffodils. And her favorites,
the variegated hostas — for each, she scribbled
a name and a circle to mark the spot she'd planted it,

on typing paper, the flaps of old catalogues, envelopes —
script so quickly written that even her daughters
hardly can read it. Which map is the last one,

the true one? No one can tell. Still I'm walking
as I remember her walking, looking to one side,
the other, ivy invading, pots half-full with rainwater,

then, by the hollow live oak, a single stalk,
leaves the size of my hand, and flaring petals
darker than old blood, deeper than new. I lower

my knees to the leaf mold and see, in sepals, the pointing
inner flower she must have seen — she must have
knelt here too, with her trowel, leaned in close

so the cool petals brushed her lips, letting loose
the rare fragrance that lives between her inscrutable
circles — constant, wild, unstoppable red.

– Anna Lena Phillips

Lilacs

Draping doorways, gracing fences, bordering
the roads, a lush tumble of lilacs in bloom.
I have been to Taos in the blistering summer

when pungent lavender was a haze
across neighboring fields, when cottonwoods
released their faux snow. And later, in the fall,

when those same trees blushed a shade close to maize.
But this blossoming is something I didn't expect,
as if time and nature conspired to create

this town's backstage transformation. In Wilmington,
for little more than a week, azalea bushes bloom
with the same decadence before their papery blossoms

wilt then fall like confetti. Afraid these lilac clusters
are about to reach that same juncture, I awaken
at the sun's first nudge, when the air is still

tinged with burnt piñon, a buffer against spring's
last chill. I snap photo after photo after photo,
wondering if such abundance lessens value.

Or perhaps this blossoming is simply an earthy
reminder that nature is generous,
and that our own spirits long to comply.

– Lavonne J. Adams

Demeter's Daffodil

To dip
into your corolla
carefully one wintry
finger and touch

to my throat
what I hear begin tuning
up downwind,
the little frogs

chorusing *cullowhee*
cullowhee, Cherokee
shivaree down by

the rain-swollen Tuckasee-
gee, what sweeter
scent than the attar
of you ever
after come back
to me, Golden
Girl!
My laughing daughter!

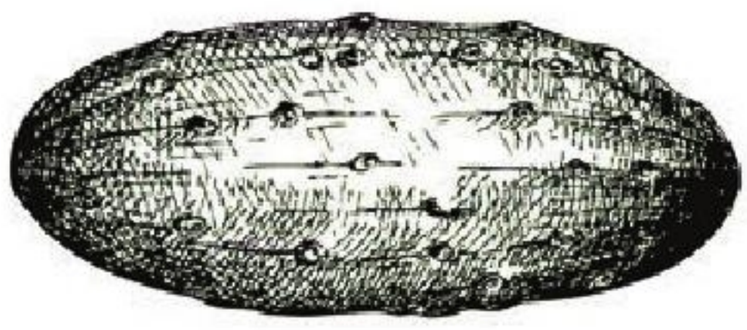
– Kathryn Stripling Byer

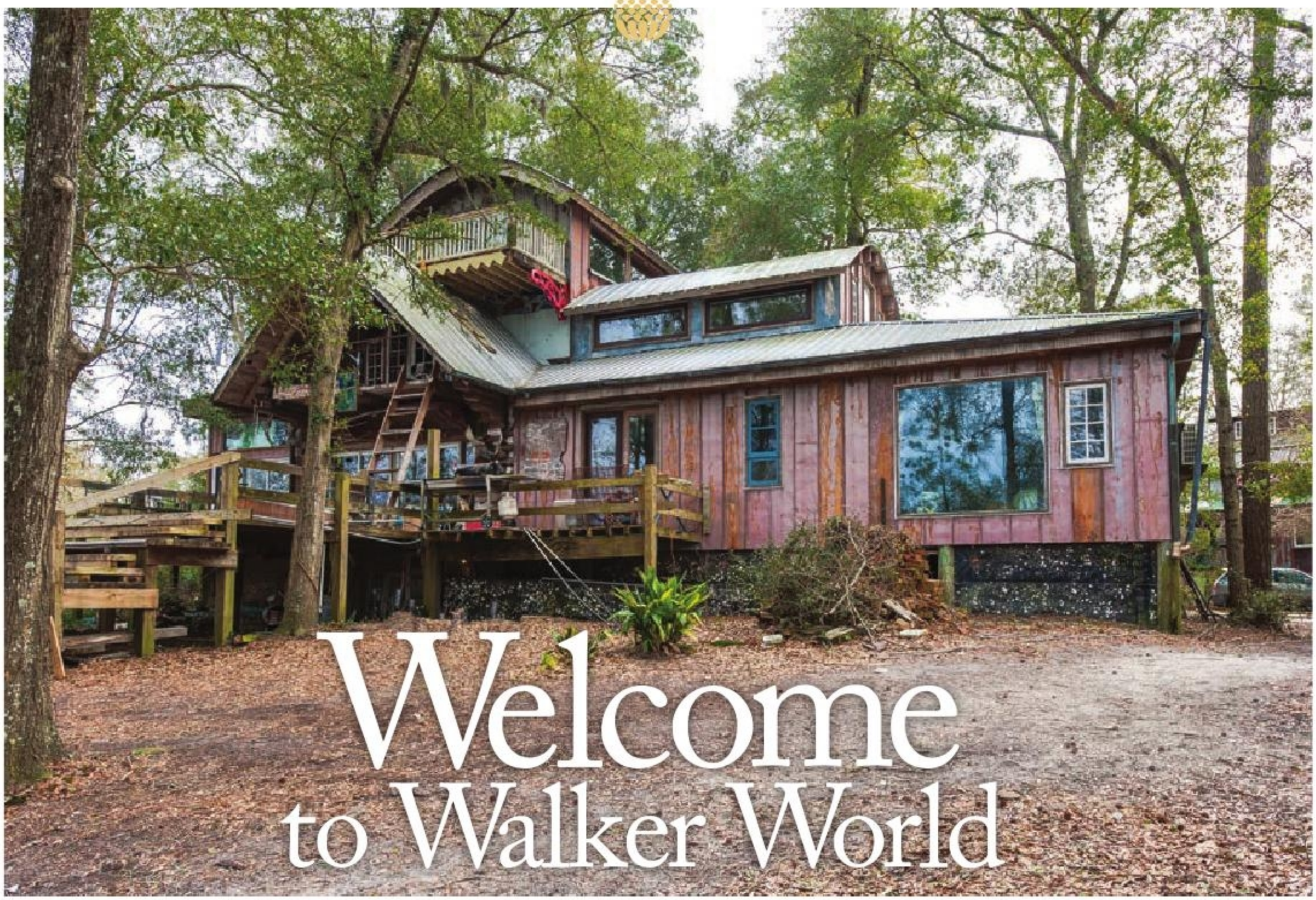
Design, or Pythagorus Plans a Garden

Eighty, if a day, my neighbor,
Miss Eleanor Prittle, long retired
Teacher of mathematics, knows the way
To plan her garden. Winter cancelled,
She springs to start in geometrics —
A perfect square, outlined first
In mason's twine, will help define
The shape she's staked, and furrows,
Parallel, running deep, will surely make
The place to drop in peas, potato eyes,
And onion sets precise as numbers.
"Your garden reminds me of your class,"
I tease, "where you taught decimals,
How to divide, the ways to keep
Things perfectly aligned
So the parts would add to something."

She stops her chores long enough
To consider answering that thought:
"I'd think you're old enough to realize
That everything resides in numbers,
How these simple plantings will multiply
To put fresh produce on the table."
Then, slapping her work-gloved hands
On blue-jeaned hips, demands,
"Take this end of my ball of twine
And pull it out across the diagonal.
I need to see whether I've erred
Or laid this plot out fair and square."
The twinkle planted in deep set eyes
Can't deceive, as she huffs, mock indignant,
"Do you really believe I taught you dullards
How to add for nothing?"

– Bob Wickless





Welcome to Walker World

From fishing shack to artistic eco-mansion, the pleasures of doing something for fun

By Joel Finsel · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

Blossom Ferry Road is paved for about half the distance to the house before it turns to gravel and then dirt. You cross a railroad track. Homes thin out as the forest thickens. Just past a white trailer is a palmetto palm with a pile of stones and a sign with an arrow pointing left. In blue, yellow and purple letters, it reads: Walker World.

After the turn, the road thins down to a single lane. The forest opens onto a clearing. Curiously, there's a park bench and a streetlamp. The urban tableau seems totally foreign to the terrain. It reminds me of the fake Prada store (described as "a pop architectural land art project") in the desert outside Marfa, Texas.

Across the road is an open shelter, almost like a lean-to, but overflowing with salvaged building materials: columns, shutters, sheets of metal. Shells of old boats and cars line the road like an *American Pickers'* dream. I count half a dozen antique Mercedeses, a school bus, a pair of Airstreams, and a carport with an upside-down sport-fishing boat for a roof. One car is actually the front end of a Mercedes welded to the back end of another. Allen Walker, the owner/builder, calls it his limo.

> You see things; and you say, "Why?" But I dream things that never were; and I say, "Why not?"
>
> — *George Bernard Shaw*

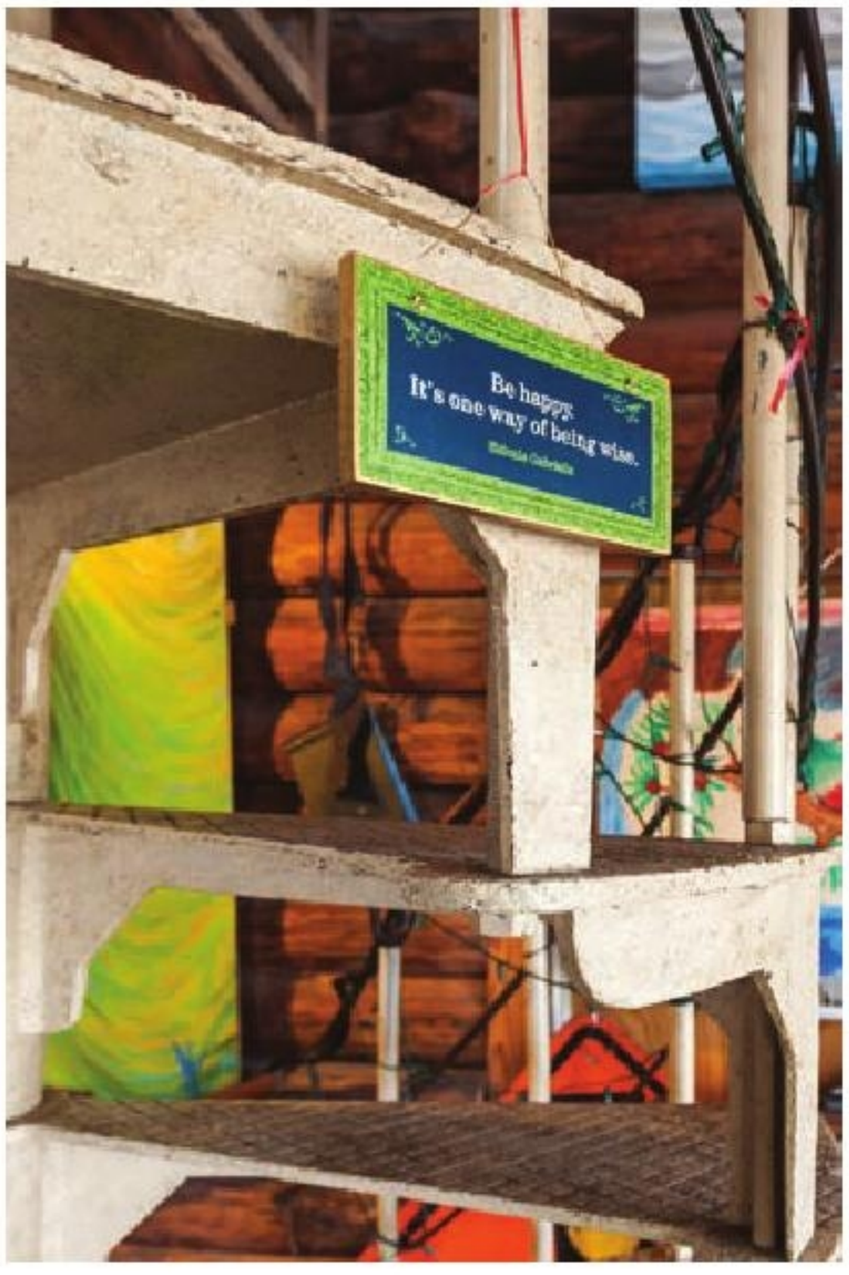
To the left of the long driveway is a garage made mostly out of glass, with a sleeping loft. Walker hasn't settled on a name yet, but a contender is "Garage-Mahal." Next door is a three-story playhouse with the guts of a piano mounted upside down. There are climbing ropes, a brass pole and swings. I pass an open-air garage. My tires crackle as my car inches forward. The path comes to an end at a paved circle surrounded by gardens. There is an entire patio set up as a chess board, with pieces as high as my thighs. I park next to an old Army jeep, a stone's throw from the Northeast Cape Fear River, finding it difficult not to smile as I take in the house.

This sprawling artistic lodge sprouted from the seed of a single-room cabin. If you look hard at the front door of the house as it appears today, you can still see the outline of the original shack. Walker keeps an old photograph of it pinned to the wall in his kitchen. It looks as if it had been built of Lincoln Logs. There's a refrigerator on the porch. "It had a collapsed cabinet for a kitchen," Walker says, "as if hobos had been living there."

Walker is no stranger to remote places. Born and raised in an old historic Wilmington home, he says he really "grew up" in a tobacco barn on a 200-acre farm in Pitt County. He remembers watching, as a young boy, while his father lifted the old barn onto a trailer and moved it a half-mile closer to the creek. About a dozen farmers came from all over the area to see the spectacle. Walker remembers looking on and feeling like there was nothing he couldn't do.

After high school he took a job on a framing crew but retired after a few weeks to be his own boss. He moved into the barn full time and built a loft, then added a kitchen and a bathroom. The back deck stood thirty feet above the swamp. Cypress knees knuckled up from below. Once the barn was ready, he filled it with paintings made during breaks from ECU classes. He bought a piano with a little

SOARING SPIRIT



light inside he could turn on, to keep moisture from damaging the strings. One day the bulb ignited something flammable, and when Allen returned from class, there was nothing but a burnt hole in the swamp where his house had been.

In 1999 he heard about a weird old cabin about ten miles north of Wilmington that might be for sale. The owner's name was Hoke Bullock. He had a long, white beard, and a seaplane dock on the river, from which he would fly back and forth to his home in Raleigh. Walker had actually heard of the place before. One of the only neighboring houses belonged to a friend of his, an underwater archaeologist named Wesley K. Hall (part of the team that recovered the *H.L. Hunley* Confederate submarine from Charleston Harbor). One day Walker got a call from Hall saying that the old man, Hoke Bullock, had died. The cabin belonged to his son now. Walker drove to Raleigh with a thousand dollars in cash, hoping to persuade Bullock's son to sell. He promised to deliver the rest of the money within a month and wound up getting the entire ten-acre plot for $100,000.

Most of his friends expected he would tear down the derelict structure and build something that was, in the words of a neighbor, "worth living in," but Walker had other ideas. He says that nearly every one of his neighbors has, at some point in the last fifteen years, called the law on him. "But once the house began to take shape," he adds, "they started to come around."

Today, inside there are unexpected "interventions" at every turn. It's a creative reinterpretation of a house. You open the door to an antique player-piano blasting out show tunes. The giant dried flower stalk of a century plant (a strange organism that flowers only once every ten or twenty years) rises three stories high, almost touching the ceiling. Suspended from the main beam that runs overhead is a 60-foot, upside-down rowing scull. The boat is too long for the house — it sticks through a hole in the front of the house, like a horn.

As Walker shows me around, I am struck by how much local history comes together in the house. Excluding the materials used in plumbing and wiring, everything in the place

has been reclaimed. Many of the windows were salvaged from the famed Lumina Pavilion at Wrightsville Beach. Old bottles incorporated into the wall give the appearance of stained glass. An aluminum airplane prop is mounted under a street sign for Soaring Spirit Drive. One mirror was salvaged from the set of *The Crow*. Out back stands a huge deck made from the docks of the old Southport and Bald Head Island marinas. Straight ahead, a deep water slip. To the left is a rope-swing platform, dangerously high-looking, for swinging out into the river. Today is one of the coldest days of the year, but Walker says that he will jump into the river if I want him to. I have the sense that I've stumbled on the Holy Fool's Southeastern retreat — not completely polished, but a decidedly great place to start a second childhood.

Recently Walker has started opening the place up to people. He lists it on Airbnb for $400 a night. He rents it to groups who need a space for weekend outings. He has a

vision of turning it into a part-time "organic artist retreat." I ask Walker if all of these plans mean that he considers the house "finished." Walker answers, "I never expect to be finished." Finishing, he says, isn't something he even wants. For him, it's all about "not losing" the sheer pleasure that can be found in "doing something for fun."

"I could have paid someone to build a house out here," he says, "but then I would have had to go to work to pay for it. Instead, I built something from garbage."

To many, his approach to building might seem backward. Instead of drawing up a plan and then buying the necessary materials, he flips it around. Only after he finds the materials ("or the material finds me," he says) does the structure begin to take shape. Only then do a pair of discarded patio doors change into huge light-pouring windows. In Walker's world, form creates function.

"I built this place for my children," he tells me. He has three by an ex-wife: a 9-year-old girl and 7-year-old twins (boy and girl). He says that although they're still too young to participate in creating the house, their perspective — "seeing the world through their eyes" — has helped bring the structure to life. It's a place where grown-ups are invited to act like children again. A place to paint, cook, fish, write poetry, swim, relax.

People have begun to notice. Last summer, in France, novelist Frédérique Deghelt was scrolling through the "most eccentric houses" on Airbnb, and spotted Walker World. She wound up bringing her family over from France for a month, and later based a character in one of her novels on Walker. He became a 70-year-old man who helps guide a woman through a difficult time.

"I knew that Frédérique's husband enjoyed playing the piano," Walker says, "so one day I bought an old concert grand and smuggled it onto the boat when they weren't watching, just for them, and covered it with a sheet. Later that day we went up the river a few miles, cooking dinner on the grill and drinking wine. At sunset, I told them I had a surprise and pulled off the sheet. You would have thought I had pulled up a trunk full of buried treasure."

Life in the Wild

The party at Walker World never ends

PHOTOGRAPH AND STORY
BY MARK HOLMBERG

We arrive at our first Walker World party by Harley, which makes it easier to thread our way through the maze of vehicles parked haphazardly on the sandy lanes and paths that snake through this remote wonderland.

It's a perfect summer night, and there's a festival-like flow of humanity as we park on the serpentine, paved-brick entry area, right next to an outdoor garden nook floored by a chess set with pieces the size of children.

Real children run around with dogs in the dimly lit front yard, if

that's what you can call the tree- and wild-shrub-crowned tangle of found and scrounged material that has been shaped into a folk-art fairytale.

A group of 20-somethings with bottled beer are playing on the full-sized, outdoor pool table. It's parked on the drive with only the stars and a scavenged shop light dangling overhead, moths orbiting as if they're partying too. Music, laughter, twinkling lights radiate from the sprawling house, which even in the dimness is clearly something different. The air is scented with the woods and river.

We had followed our friend, Dave Walker, to this open party, one of several here every year. Dave, master scrounger and Renaissance man, is the father of Allen Walker, who created all this.

Dave and I had come out here a few weeks before, and I found myself helping Allen hoist and anchor an ancient dory into the ceiling on a back deck as a decorative element.

"Give us a hand here," Allen told me. "You'll feel better about yourself."

He's Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn combined, with some Dr. Seuss and a little Casanova and plenty of rough-and-tumble Randle McMurphy from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. The kind of guy who can move a valuable 600-pound baby grand piano by himself, after scrounging it from a flood and lovingly restoring it. (He can play it quite nicely, too.)

Dave takes us up to meet the artist-in-residence (at the time), and we join the throng of partiers in Walker World's beatniky, separate studio house listening to golden girl and twirler Mezzanine Inbetween (as she calls herself) share her mystical paintings of long-haired beauties.

We feel like we're at a gallery opening.

We then tour the separate shop building, a work of art in itself that houses the latest Mercedes collectibles, big tools and building project materials. Dave points out two Airstreams, one his and one Allen's, which we can use if we want to stay the night.

We step down to the river and check out the Walker marina, marveling at the pontoon boats Allen planked together into one huge party raft. Dave told how he and the upright piano on the bow had somehow tumbled overboard during a recent river party. (True story. Dave wriggled out from under certain plunging death, and within days another scrounged piano was aboard.)

And then we're in the sprawling main house, exploring, climbing, feeling and touching the kaleidoscope of materials and art, often mismatched and unfinished yet somehow complete.

All evening we meet and greet others touring the property, all soaking up this living gallery with its magical feng shui that encourages coziness and the kind of easy conversation you can find at a really good art opening. It's this vibe that inspires even surly teenagers whose parents rent the retreat to paint or compose prose.

All ages, all types of people are here, from the rustic regular partiers who help Allen with his never-ending Walker World projects to older, nicely dressed folks (two seasoned couples sat on a sofa right below that old dory in the ceiling) and lots of happy young'uns in their 20s and 30s, drinking and chatting. Many wear that "can-you-believe-this-place" expression on their faces.

Potluck dishes fan out from the concrete-floored kitchen with its old industrial stove and cooking weaponry.

Lots of wine!

Such comfortable milling and noshing, surrounded by a wild variety of art, more than a few pieces by Allen.

The pitch of the party has been slowly rising with the collective blood-alcohol content. But no drunkenness. The vibe is mellow.

Outside on the amphitheater platform seemingly made of freeway parts, the popular Brooklyn band The Everymen cranks up a long, sweaty set of danceable originals.

We marvel and dance. This band is fun — and good!

We watch a guy arrive in a firefighter's coat and helmet, dragging a big propane tank and some kind of nozzle gizmo. Next thing you know, he's shooting big spears of flame into the night sky, on time with the music. It's like magic! And it's just a Walker World friend who volunteered to spice up the night.

When the band finishes its set, we chat with Catherine, the singer. She said the band fell in love with the place during a previous visit and had to come back.

We weave our way back inside in time to meet Allen's striking ex-wife and their kids as the say their goodbyes. They'd had a big day of swimming and playing on the property.

Allen holds court near the entry, greeting and introducing and answering questions and bidding guests goodnight. Known far and wide as an uncanny host who inspires comfort and creativity, he's sober and engaging, wearing a nice dress shirt not entirely buttoned. Several younger women are listening, and I'm reminded that he was featured in a local magazine article about the area's most eligible bachelors.

His father had left earlier. We decide to leave a little before midnight as yet more people arrive.

I'm not sure how long this party lasted. (Some last two or three days, I'm told.) But riding away from Walker World, we both felt we had been a part of something quite special, as essential and inspiring as a visit to enchanted Airlie Gardens — but oh-so-different.

Mark Holmberg, longtime reporter and columnist for CBS-6 in Richmond, Virginia and the Richmond Times-Dispatch, is our King of Queen Street.

He's Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn combined, with some Dr. Seuss and a little Casanova and plenty of rough-and-tumble Randle McMurphy from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

Demeter's Garden

The spirit of a Greek goddess presides over a featured stop on Cape Fear Garden Club's annual Azalea Garden Tour

By Ashley Wahl | Photographs By Mark Steelman

The Azalea Garden Tour looms, only five weeks away, but Ruth Hogan is unruffled. Behind her, wire bird cages and woven baskets consume kitchen countertops, and a tray of miniature ferns awaits placement in tiny worlds populated by wee folk with brightly colored wings. Her granddaughters will help with those.

As a gentle rain nourishes the leafless shrubs and early daffodils in the backyard garden, Ruth looks out across the dreamy landscape, eclectic yet tidy. She pauses to take in the action: jays and cardinals flitting from tree to feeder; copper mobiles constantly dancing; the green shoots of the *Kerria japonica* softly stirring beyond the garden path; rain pelting the meandering stone wall and garden arbors, transforming her garden into something out of a Claude Monet painting.

She doesn't fret about what the garden might look like for the tour. The irises will bloom or they won't. Same for the Lady Banks' rose and the Encore azaleas. It's that simple. From her seat at the kitchen table, the gardener admires the distinctive beauty of the present moment.

"I do love all the seasons," says Ruth, pointing out how, on this day, the limbs of the coral bark maple look like crisp brush strokes against the lush screen of leyland cypress. Five weeks from now everything will be different. Deciduous trees will have leafed out and, like it or not, wisteria will tangle with cypress and cedar, transforming the evergreen backdrop into a fragrant violet drape. The fairy gardens will be ready too, tucked among the flowering shrubs so that visitors feel as if they've stumbled upon a tiny pocket of magic.

This year, the Cape Fear Garden Club's annual tour includes eleven private gardens, all new to the Azalea Garden Tour, plus Lower Cape Fear Hospice's Heritage Garden and historic Airlie. The Hogan Family Garden, located at 933 Johns Orchard Lane, is one of two featured stops located within the tranquil Bridger's Creek subdivision off Dunbar Road. While the house has contemporary lines — we're talking about a 2004 Cape Cod flanked by bald cypress and towering magnolia — the gardens suggest storybook cottage.

The whimsy begins with the weeping willow out front.

Follow the walk past drift roses and muhly grass, on past the young tung tree

oil and the slow growing olive at the side of the house. Once you arrive at the weeping cherry, its placement inspired by the adjacent stained glass window, the view of the backyard resembles a secret clearing in an enchanted forest.

Inside the "Oval" garden, where the flowering apricot blooms powdery pink at Christmastime, turquoise wire chair and table are surrounded by camellia, hellebore, fern and azalea, and a copper bird bath brims with rainwater. The flagstone path, now lined with yellow jonquils, leads across the lawn to a garden arbor heavy with climbing vines.

With any luck, "the banksiae rose will be a waterfall of yellow blooms" for the tour, says Robin Kelly Tickner, one of the garden's faithful stewards. But flowering or not, the grand entrance of the "Upper" garden is a portal to what can only be described as a fairy wonderland — a playful world where flowering perennials are punctuated by garden boulders and fanciful copper art. Unusual features include an elegant wrought iron bed filled with pansies and a massive stone sculpture of Demeter, mother-goddess of harvest slash neighborhood garden angel.

"She was the last thing on the truck," recalls Ruth of the move from Sarasota, Florida, in 2005. And when movers unloaded the seraphic figure at 2 o'clock in the morning, they asked Ruth for a shovel.

Demeter informs the entire garden.

According to ancient Greek myth, when her virgin daughter, Persephone, was abducted by the god of the underworld, Hades, Demeter was overcome with such profound grief that the seasons altogether stopped. Zeus sent his messenger, Hermes, to the underworld to fetch her, but since Persephone had secretly eaten a handful of pomegranate seeds while in the realm of the dead, she became bound there for certain months of the year — the unfruitful seasons on Earth.

A world without seasons is how Ruth might describe her time in Florida, home for thirty-five years.

"I found plants that were drought and heat tolerant," says Ruth, "but I didn't miss the seasons because I didn't *know* about the seasons."

In Sarasota, Demeter overlooked a grassy landscape and swimming pool.

"The kids wanted her to come to Wilmington," says Ruth.

Daughter Stephanie, middle of three, lives just through the woods. Granddaughters Alyna, 10, and Ashlyn, 7, were responsible for picking out the air plants and ornamentals (peperomia, polka dot and zebra plants, dwarf mondo grass) that will accent bird cages, baskets and other fairy garden vessels on the tour. Inside these imaginative worlds, deer figurines are nestled among tiny bird houses and lush greenery, and woodland critters are perched on miniature foot bridges and mossy beds.

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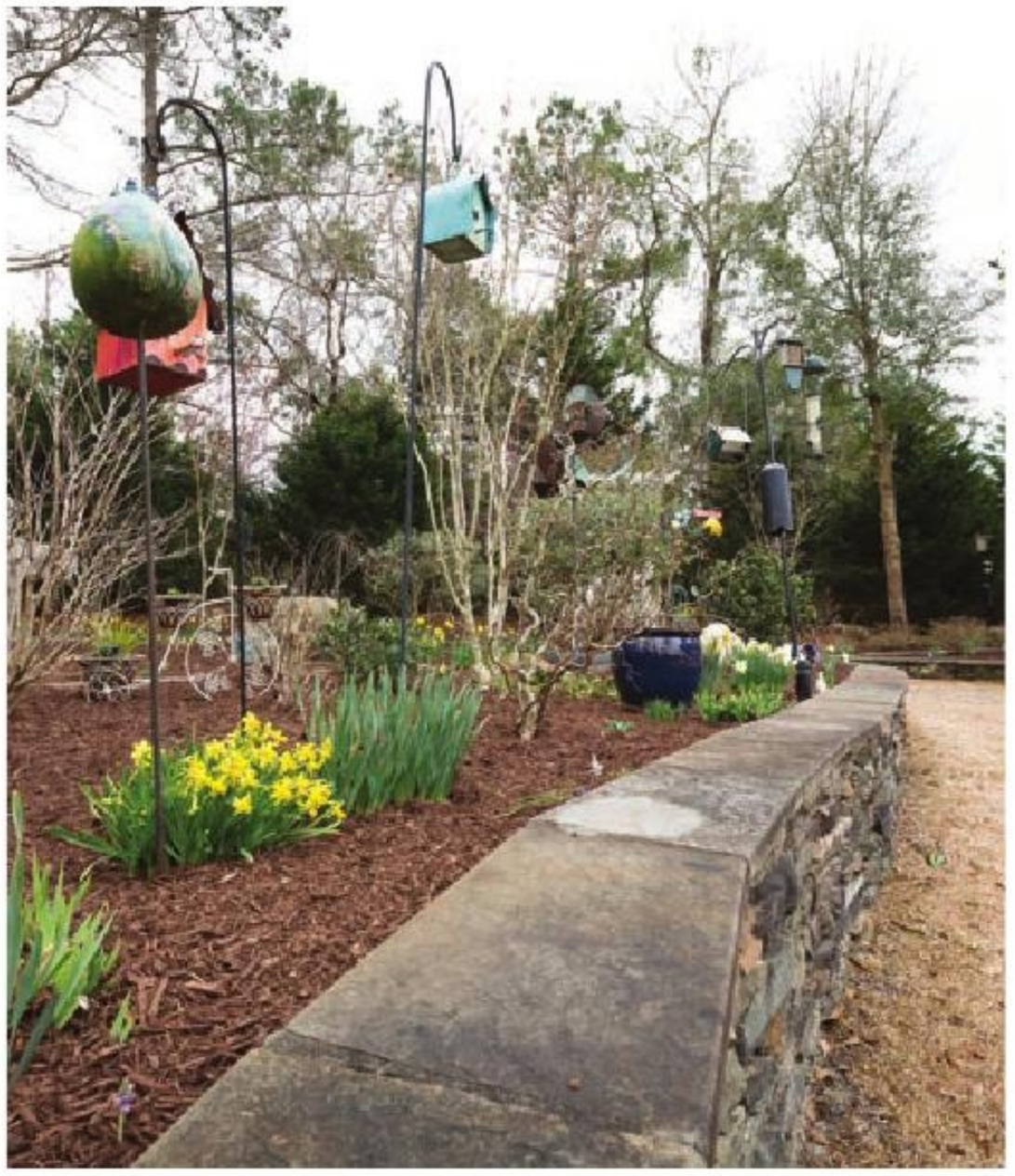


Real deer visit Ruth's garden, too.

"You can see in the pine straw, down by the birdbath, little hollowed out places where they lie down," says Ruth. "They're beautiful, but they will eat anything that's not nailed down."

Unless, of course, they don't like it. Daffodils, for instance. But tulips are what Ruth calls deer candy.

"Hundreds, maybe thousands of dollars went to feeding the local deer herd," she says. "All the things that they ate I've never replanted."

As for the squirrels: Hide the patio cushions.

"They'll pull out the stuffing to build their nests," says Ruth, whose sense of humor is perhaps what makes her garden so enchanted.

All birds are welcome: bluebirds and buntings, goldfinches, house wrens and sparrows.

"They usually help themselves to the pineapple guava," says Robin, who has watched Ruth's garden grow for the past eight years.

As has Demeter.

Summers brings dozens of flowering hydrangeas. In autumn, the muhly grass blooms pink. Wintertime, the apricot perfumes the yard with cinnamon-scented flowers.

Nearly one hundred azaleas will be among the spring bloomers, says Ruth, but equally stunning are the weeping redwood, the variegated weigela, the snowball viburnum and bridal wreath willow.

So take a seat on the teak bench by the stone fountain. Or the wire butterfly bench flanked with birdcage planters. Perhaps you, too, will discover the beauty of right now. And if you happen to believe in fairies, well, you just might see some.

The 62nd Annual Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Garden Tour takes place April 10–12. Tour opens Friday, April 10, at 10 a.m., with the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at Hugh Morton Amphitheater at Greenfield Lake. Tickets, $25, are good for all three days. Info: www.capefeargardenclub.org/azalea-garden-tour.

ALMANAC

April

By Noah Salt

"When I was about 10 years old, I gave my teacher an April Fool's sandwich which had a dead goldfish in it." – Alan Alda

Lilac Madness

In his delightful book *A Contemplation Upon Flowers*, North Carolina garden whiz Bobby Ward points out that in the language of flowers, white lilacs in bloom symbolize purity of spirit and youthful innocence, while purple lilacs speak of passion and first emotions of love. Anyone who grew up in the American Northeast or Midwest is familiar with the sight and smell of lilacs in late April – the truest herald of spring's arrival in the North Country – and often misses them fiercely upon arrival. Take heart, Yankee transplants. Most lilacs require over 2,000 hours of temps below 45 degrees Fahrenheit in order to bloom, and fortunately there are several varieties that will do just fine here in North Carolina's relatively warm zone 7–8 winters. The Almanac Gardener has had excellent luck with a variety called "Betsy Ross" that puts out beautiful white blooms and a wonderful fragrance. Fortunately, Descanso Gardens of Southern California has developed several varieties that may be found through your local nursery or purchased directly from several fine garden catalogs. These are taken from the company website: www.decansogardens.org.

Lavender Lady

A Descanso hybrid, the Lavender Lady (Syringa vulgaris "Lavender Lady") was bred for the sole purpose of tolerating the heat found in Southern California. The violet- and lavender-colored curled petals of its highly fragrant blooms attract insect pollinators such as butterflies and bees. Reaching heights of 10 to 12 feet with about a 6-foot span, the Lavender Lady will successfully grow and bloom in zone 9.

Angel White

Another Descanso hybrid, the Angel White or White Angel (Syringa vulgaris "White Angel") produces your typically fragrant lilac blooms in a snow white to creamy white color. Like the Lavender Lady, Angel White is a more heat-tolerant variety than most other lilac species and cultivars, so it will grow in zone 9. It grows up to 12 feet tall with a width of about 10 feet.

Excel

The Excel lilac (Syringa x hyacinthiflora "Excel") is a hybrid of Syringa vulgaris and Syringa oblata. Known as early flowering lilac, the Excel can develop light lavender blooms seven to ten days before other varieties. It grows and blooms in hardiness zones 3 through 9, reaching 8 to 12 feet tall and 6 to 10 feet wide. Plant the Excel in full or partial sunlight, like other lilacs.

California Rose

Another lilac that does not require a cold winter chill to bloom, the California Rose (Syringa x hyacinthiflora "California Rose") does not produce the typical purple- to lavender-colored blooms associated with other lilac bushes. Instead, it develops pale pink petals that are not as fragrant as other lilac varieties but still attract butterflies and bees.

Esther Staley

Like the California Rose, Esther Staley (Syringa hyacinthiflora "Esther Staley") produces fragrant, true pink blooms and can generally stand the heat and mild winters common in zone 9. This sun-loving shrub grows to about 8 feet tall in neutral or alkaline soil that has good drainage. Like other lilacs, the blooms of Esther Staley can be cut and added to floral arrangements.

Blue Skies

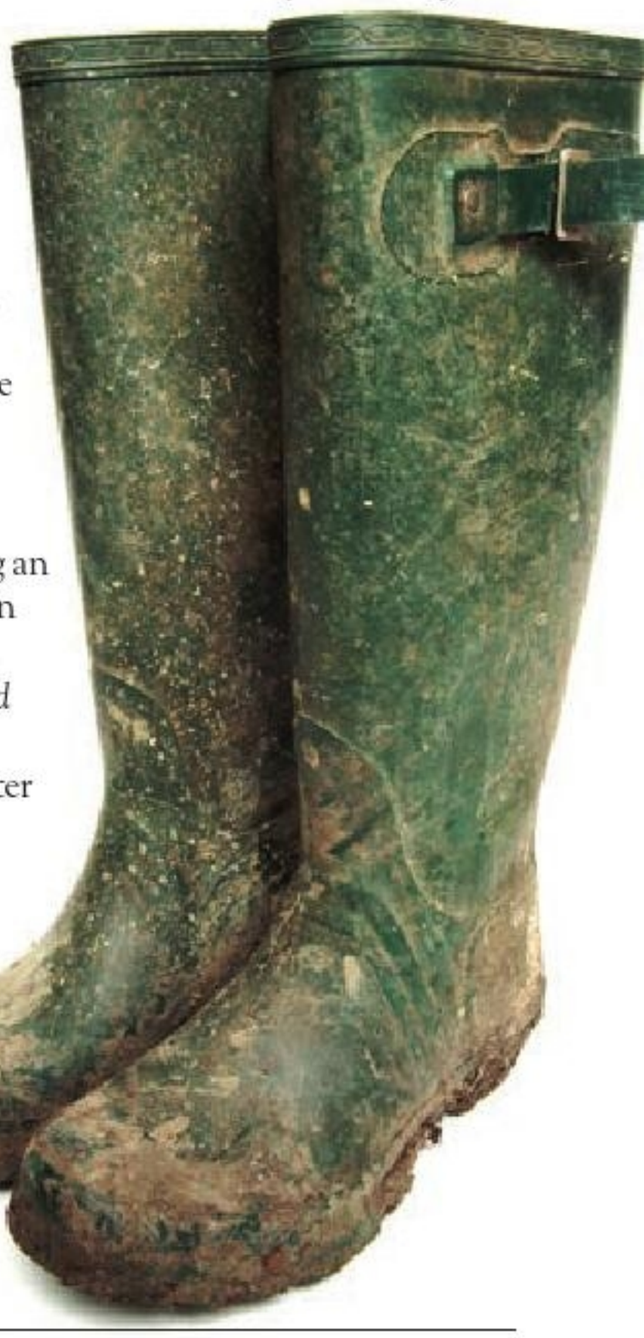
Sometimes called Monroe, Blue Skies (Syringa vulgaris "Blue Skies") produces bluish violet blooms that are highly fragrant with a pleasant lilac scent. Blue Skies do not need the chill period like most lilacs do and will bloom in zone 9. In addition, Blue Skies is moderately tolerant to drought conditions but prefers locations with moist, fertile, well-drained soil.

A final tip: lilacs need a neutral soil with a pH close to 7.0. If your garden is like most, the pH is closer to 5.0 than 7.0. You will probably need to add lime. Call your local Extension office and ask them about their soil-test kits.

Let It Rain

Every spring, someone once said, is an astonishment – like the only spring. And if one Thomas Tusser who wrote *One Hundred Good Points of Husbandry* in 1557 can be believed, "sweet April showers do spring May flowers."

Curiously, here in North Carolina, April typically ranks as one of the moderately rainy of months, averaging 3.5 inches of precipitation, placing it behind July, June, August, March and September. Still, the astonishing factor of April is apparent to anyone who has eyes and a working nose this month, as gardens and neighborhood yards from here to the horizon return to life with a vengeance. A moderately rainy spring has many unseen benefits including an improved water table and natural hydration to plants. Too much and you have flooded basements and mold to cope with. The *Old Farmer's Almanac*, incidentally, which correctly predicted the deeper cold of late winter and February snows, forecasts a warmer than normal April and May, with drier weather in the northern parts of the Southeast and wetter ones down south, possibly even a late spring tropical storm. Get your bumbershoots and Wellies out, folks.

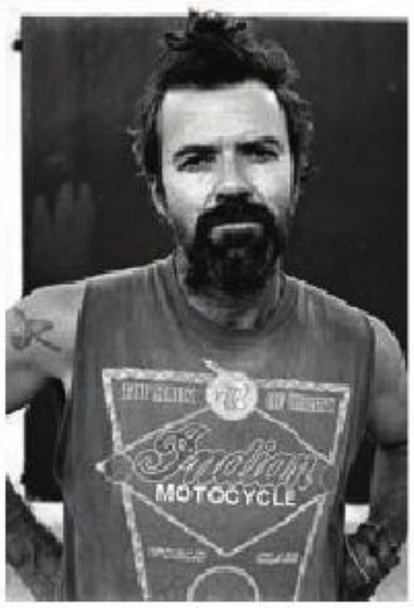


April 2015

Arts Calendar

Submerged Fashion Show
4/3

Azalea Garden Tour
4/10



Jarabe De Palo in Concert
4/21

The Hot Sardines in Concert
4/25

4/1 Spring Fashion Preview
7 p.m. Fashion show featuring the latest trends for spring with a nod to *Mad Men*. Looks modeled by local celebrities in their 20s to 80-plus. Styled by Jess James. Admission: $25. Bakery 105, 105 Orange Street, Wilmington. Info: stylegirljessjames.com.

4/1–4 Wilmington Fashion Week
Celebrate local designers, artists and models plus this year's latest Port City fashion trends. Opening Night Party on 4/1 at Bourgie Nights. See website for details on live fashion shows, "Shop the Runway" marketplace, and emerging designer showcase. Awards and closing party held 4/4. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtonfashionweek.org.

4/1–3 Spring Break Week
12–4 p.m. Hands-on science activities for kids ages 5 and up. See website for schedule. Admission: $5–8. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4364 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

4/1–5/4 CFCC Student Exhibition
12–5 p.m. (Tuesday–Thursday). Fourth Friday reception on 4/24. Wilma W. Daniels Gallery, CFCC, 200 Hanover Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7691 or cfcc.edu/blogs/wilmagallery.

4/2 Spring Eggventure
9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Egg hunts at 9:30 a.m. (ages 2–3), 10:30 a.m. (ages 4–5) & 11:30 a.m. (ages 6–9). Pre-registration required. Admission: $5. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/2 Jazz at the CAM
6:30–8 p.m. El Jaye Johnson and the Port City All-Stars. Admission: $5–12. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

4/2 Movie Screening
7 p.m. *The Wizard of Oz*, digitally remastered on the big screen. Admission: $10. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

4/2–5 Musical Revue
7 p.m. (Thursday – Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Thalian Association Children's Theater presents *Around the World*. Admission: $12. Hannah Block 2nd Street Stage, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1788 or www.wilmingtoncommunityarts.org.

4/3 Birding Cruise
10 a.m. One-hour tour aboard *The Shamrock* with Captain Joey Abbate. Admission: $25–35. Blockade Runner Beach Resort Dock, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 509-2838 or www.nccoast.org.

4/3 Egg Hunt & Carnival
10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Continuous games and egg hunts. Admission: $5. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

4/3 Submerged Fashion Show
8 p.m. Fashion show/fundraiser presented by Hot Wax. Live music by The Midatlantic; food by Middle of the Island Catering; silent auction to benefit s.h.a.r.e. Admission: $20. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 616-2930 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

4/3–5 Historic Carriage Tour
10 a.m. – 10 p.m. Celebrate spring on the coast with a "bunny-drawn" tour through historic downtown Wilmington. Surprises for the kids. Admission: $5–12. Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-8889 or horsedrawntours.com.

4/4 Azalea 10K/5K
6:30 a.m. 5k, 10k and one-mile fun run. Admission: $30–35. Proceeds benefit the Cape Fear Volunteer Center Big Buddy Program. Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Main Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 392-8180 or www.azaleafestivalbigbuddy5k.com.

4/5 Oakdale Cemetery Tour
2 p.m. Easter Sunday tour with architectural historian Janet Seapker. Admission: $10. Oakdale Cemetery, 520 North Fifteenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-5682 or www.oakdalecemetery.org.

4/6 Word Weavers
7–9 p.m. Christian writers' group meeting. Life Point Church, 3534 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 619-7344 or sondradron@bellsouth.net.

4/8 Bird Walk
8 a.m. Meet Wild Bird & Garden's Jill Peleuses and Airlie Gardens environmental educators. Admission: $3–9. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

4/8 Azalea Queen's Coronation
3–4 p.m. Meet the 2015 NC Azalea Festival queen, belles, celebrity guests and more. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/queens-coronation.

4/8 Public Education Program
7 p.m. "A Retrospective Insight on Sea Level Rise" with UNCW's Paul Hearty, Ph.D. Suggested donation: $10. Stanback Education Center, 309 West Salisbury Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 509-2838 or www.nccoast.org.

4/9 Dessert Expo
3–7 p.m. Delicious creations from local chefs, bakers, chocolatiers and candy makers. Admission: $5–10. Coastline Convention Center, 501 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: www.southeasterndessertexpo.com.

4/9 Alan Jackson in Concert
7 p.m. Country superstar Alan Jackson performs at the NC Azalea Festival. Admission: $49.50. Cape Fear Community College, 411 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org.

4/9–12 Spring Renewal Retreat
Includes wine and cheese reception, healthy

artisan breakfasts, yoga classes, smoothie and goody bag from Island Wellness Market, and a group dinner at Surfhouse Café. Additional add-ons include massage, Thai Yoga body work and acupuncture treatment. Admission: $246–343. Beacon House Inn Bed & Breakfast, 714 Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-6244 or www.beaconhouseinnb-b.com.

4/9–12 Cole Bros. Circus
4:30 & 7:30 p.m. (Thursday & Friday); 1:30, 4:30 & 7:30 p.m. (Saturday); 1:30 & 4:30 p.m. (Sunday). Highlights include the world's funniest horse, white tiger and high wire acts, and human cannonball. Admission: $20–28. Wilmington International Airport, 1740 Airport Boulevard, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/circus.

4/10 Airlie Garden Party
12 p.m. Luncheon/garden party for sponsors and dignitaries of the NC Azalea Festival. Includes Citadell Summerall Guards performance. Attire: Southern garden party. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/airlie-luncheon-garden-party.

4/10 Nelly in Concert
7 p.m. Multi-platinum rap superstar Nelly performs at the NC Azalea Festival. Admission: $35–45. Cape Fear Community College, 411 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/nelly.

4/10–12 Spring Plant Sale
9 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 12–5 p.m. (Sunday). Forest Hills Hobby Greenhouse, 2318 Metts Avenue, Wilmington. Info: www.hobbygreenhouseclub.org.

4/10–12 Juried Art Show & Sale
10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Sunday). Works by more than 100 local and national artists. Hannah Block Community Arts Center, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 409-4064 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/juried-art-show.

4/10–12 Azalea Garden Tour
10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Self-guided garden tour sponsored by the Cape Fear Garden Club. Tickets: $25. Info: (910) 742-0905 or www.azaleagardentour.org.

4/10–12 Azalea Street Fair
5–10 p.m. (Friday); 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Sunday). Arts and crafts vendors plus live entertainment on four stages. Market, Front & Water Streets, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/street-fair.

4/11 Azalea Festival Parade
9:30–11:30 a.m. Festival procession through downtown Wilmington. Third & Water Streets, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/parade.

4/11 Youth Nature Program
1:30–3 p.m. Join park naturalists for Geocaching & Orienteering in Nature, a real world treasure hunt with a compass and GPS. Recommended for ages 6–11. Admission: $3. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/11 & 12 Azalea Coin Show
10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Sunday). More than thirty dealers from surrounding states appraise, buy, sell and trade coins, currency and other numismatic items. Don McNeely of Gold History Corporation will demonstrate gold panning. Free foreign coins for children. Elks Lodge, 5102 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/boxing.

4/11 & 12 Azalea Historic Home Tour
1–6 p.m. (Saturday); 1–5 p.m. (Sunday). Self-guided tour of nine historic homes and one church. Admission: $25–30. Proceeds benefit the Historic Wilmington Foundation. Info: (910) 762-2511 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/historic-home-tour.

4/11 & 12 Azalea Boxing Tournament
2 p.m. National and international levels plus military branches. Includes six divisions. Free admission. CFCC Schwartz Center, 401 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/boxing.

4/13 Golf Tournament & Games Day
11:30 a.m. Golf, duplicate bridge, party bridge, mahjong, Mexican train, 50/50 raffle, prize giveaways, silent auction and meals. Admission: $16.50/lunch; $25/games; $200/player; $800/team of four. Proceeds benefit the Good Shepherd Center. Country Club of Landfall, 1550 Landfall Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-4424 or www.goodshepherdwilmington.org.

4/13 Celtic Spring Tea
2 p.m. Celtic spring tea in the formal parlors of the Bellamy Mansion. Admission: $37.45. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

4/13 Prologue
7–8 p.m. Ben Steelman of *StarNews* speaks with literary legend Karen E. Bender about her short story collection, Refund. WHQR, MC Erny Gallery, 254 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-1640 or artscouncilofwilmington.org.

4/13 & 14 Youth Nature Program
10–11 a.m. Children ages 2–5 discover nature. Theme: "Signs of Spring." Admission: $3. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/13, 15 & 20 Literacy Tutor Training
10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Literacy tutor training for adults. Admission: $20–50. Cape Fear Literacy Council, 1012 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-0911 or www.cfliteracy.org.

4/14 Legos at the Library
3:30–4:30 p.m. Elementary school students practice problem solving, express creativity, and hone communication and motor skills. Myrtle Grove Public Library, 5155 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6393 or www.nhclibrary.org.

4/14 Poetry Reading
7 p.m. Local poet Andrea Young and mentor, Eric Weil. Free. NHC Main Library, 201 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6323 or www.ncpoetrysociety.org/gcdps.

4/15 Snake & Turtle Feeding
4–4:30 p.m. Program for ages 3 and up. Admission: $1. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/16 NC Birding Trail Hike
8 a.m. – 4 p.m. Two-mile hike along the North Carolina Birding Trail at Suggs Mill Pond. Transportation included. Admission: $10. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/16 Nonprofit Luncheon
11:30 a.m. Lunch & Learn to discover how organizations can effectively use dashboards. Admission: $10. Brunswick Community College Leland Center, 2050 Enterprise Boulevard, Leland. Info: (910) 962-3844.

4/16 National Theatre Live
2 p.m. Tom Stoppard's *The Hard Problem*. Admission: $18–20. Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, 620 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195 or www.uncw.edu/olli.

4/16 Historic Tour
6 p.m., 6:30 p.m., 7 p.m. & 7:30 p.m. Costumed guides at the Latimer House. Admission: $10. Latimer House, 126 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-0492 or www.hslcf.org.

4/16 Pro Musica
7–8 p.m. Celebrate the music of American composer William Bolcom. Barry Salwen on piano; Justin Hoke on guitar; Nancy King and Robert Nathanson will perform selections from "Cabaret Songs." Admission: $5–10. Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

4/16 Education Session
7–8:30 p.m. Learn about Diamondback terrapins and how you can join the 2015 Terrapin Tally paddling survey. Suggested donation: $10. Stanback Education Center, 309 West Salisbury Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 509-2838 or www.nccoast.org.

4/16–19 Live Theater
8 p.m. (Thursday – Saturday); 2 p.m. (Sunday). *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Play also runs 4/23–26. Admission: $5–12. UNCW Cultural Arts Building, 5270 Randall Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/theatre.

4/16–20 Master Gardener Plant Sale
9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Friday, Saturday & Monday); 1–5 p.m. (Sunday). Shrubs, ornamental plants, annuals, perennials, azaleas and Japanese maples, all grown by master gardeners. Proceeds benefit the NHC Cooperative Extension, the Arboretum, and other community programs. NHC Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-2332 or nhcarboretum.com.

4/17 Fairy Garden Workshop
9–11 a.m. Workshop led by artist Kathleen McLeod. Bring your own container. Admission: $35. Wild Bird & Garden, 105 East Brown Street, Southport. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

4/17 Day in the Country
9 a.m. – 7 p.m. Fundraiser/business networking event includes skeet shooting, fishing, home and property tours, live bluegrass music and Trey Herring bourbon tastings. Admission: $125. Proceeds benefit the Harrelson Center. Genteel Plantation, 160 Genteel Lane, Atkinson. Info: (910) 343-8212 or www.harrelsoncenter.org.

4/17 Pajama Party
6–9 p.m. Charity pajama party includes fashion show, silent auction, PJ contest, plus drinks and breakfast buffet. Admission: $50; $375/table. Proceeds benefit United Way of the Cape Fear and the 10-year plan to end chronic homelessness. Bluewater Waterfront Grill, 4 Marina Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: www.6thannualpajamaparty.eventbrite.com.

4/17 Kids' Night Out
6–9 p.m. Fun and games for children age 7–13. Free; pre-registration required. Maides Park, 1101 Manly Avenue, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-7867 or www.wilmingtonrecreation.com.

4/17 Organ Recital
7 p.m. Marilyn Keiser, professor emeritus at the Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University. Free. St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 16 North Sixteenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-4578 or www.spechurch.com.

4/17 John Lithgow Live
8 p.m. Award-winning actor John Lithgow performs his one-man theatrical memoir, *Stories by Heart*. Admission: $45–65. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/arts/lithgow.html.

4/17 Civil Twilight in Concert
8 p.m. Nashville-based, South African-born indie rock band. Admission: $15–25. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

4/17–26 Port City's Top Comic
Eighth annual stand-up comedy competition. Preliminary rounds are held April 17, 18, 24 & 25; finals held April 26. Audience vote determines winner. Dead Crow Comedy Room, 265 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: capefearcomedy.com/port-city-top-comic.

4/17–19 Music on Market
7:30 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 3:30 p.m. (Sunday). *Little Women* performed by local cast. Free. St. Andrews-Covenant Presbyterian Church, 1416 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-9693 or www.musiconmarket.org.

4/17–19 Surfalorus Film Festival
Annual surf film festival presented by the Cucalorus Film Foundation in conjunction with the Waterman Ocean Festival. Screenings of the hottest new surf films and documentaries; board and beach expo; raffle and BBQ. See website for schedule and locations. Info: (910) 343-5995 or www.surfalorus.com.

4/17–19 Seaglass Salvage Market
9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 12–5 p.m. (Sunday). Find home décor; furniture; up-cycled, recycled and restyled items. Located at 1987 Andrew Jackson Highway, Leland. Info: www.seaglasssalvagemarket.com.

4/18 Phlock to the Beach Bash
8 a.m. – 10 p.m. Jimmy Buffet-style beach bash featuring an all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast, Art on the Apron, Wings and Wheels automotive and airplane show, food, games, contests and live music by Party of Two and Chillin Dixie. Admission: $5–10. Cape Fear Regional Jetport, 4019 Long Beach Road, Oak Island. Info: (910) 457-6964 or www.southport-oakisland.com.

4/18 Walk to Defeat ALS
9 a.m. Family-friendly and pet-friendly 3k walk. Proceeds benefit the ALS Association's care services and research. UNCW Greene Track & Field, Hamilton Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 742-7734 or web.alsa.org.

4/18 Bird Program
9:15–10:30 a.m. Join Wild Bird & Garden and the Coastal Plain Conservation Group to learn about our region's nesting birds. Free. Temptations Everyday Gourmet, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

4/18 Coffee with the Birds
9:30–10:30 a.m. Enjoy shade-grown coffee while observing the birds. Admission: $3. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/18 CFCC Boat Show
9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Celebrate the craft of boat building with exhibits, self-guided workshop tours, student displays, interactive demos and kid's activities. Features wooden and fiberglass boats, kayaks and skiffs. Proceeds provide scholarship funding for students in CFCC's boat building programs. Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7403 or cfcc.edu/martech/boatshow.

4/18 MS Walk
10 a.m. Four-mile walk connects people living with MS and those who care about them. Proceeds benefit life-changing programs and cutting-edge research through the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Greenfield Lake Park, 410 South Eighth Street, Wilmington. Info: (336) 299-5473 or walknct.nationalmssociety.org.

4/18 Blessing of the Fleet
11 a.m. Join fellow boaters to pass in review and receive a blessing for your vessel and crew. Call Cape Fear Sail and Power Squadron on VHF 16 or 72 to receive instructions on the line-up. Seapath Yacht Club Gazebo, Motts Channel, Wrightsville Beach. Info: www.capefearsailandpowersquadron.org.

4/18 Island of Lights Fashion Show
11 a.m. – 2 p.m. Fashion show with styles from Touché and Unique Boutique. Lunch catered by Middle of the Island. Includes silent auction and raffle. Admission: $25. American Legion Post No. 129, 1500 Bridge Barrier Road, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 617-5945 or www.pleasureislandoflights.com/fashion-show.html.

4/18 Money Smart Day
11 a.m. – 3 p.m. Free financial literacy activities for families. Piggy bank craft, money smart game show, free pizza and financial comedy routine by Colin Ryan. NHC Main Library, 201 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6306 or www.nhclibrary.org.

4/18 Legacy Dinner & Concert
6 p.m. Catered dinner (optional) and show, The Road to Carnegie Hall. Admission: $150/dinner & show; $35/show only. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

4/18 Tribute Concert
7:30 p.m. Long Bay Symphony presents "A Tribute to John Denver" featuring Tom Becker. Admission: $27–29. Odell Williamson Auditorium, BCC, 50 College Road NW, Bolivia. Info: (910) 755-7416 or www.bccowa.com.

4/19 Race for the Planet
8 a.m. Fort Fisher 5k offers scenic views of the ocean, maritime forest and the historic Fort Fisher Civil War site. Admission: $30–35. NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher, 900 Loggerhead Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 458-7468 or ncaquariums.com/fortfisher.

4/19 Studio Series
12–2 p.m. Artist Kathleen McLeod leads a workshop on painting wooden birdhouses. Admission: $15. Wild Bird & Garden, 105 East Brown Street, Southport. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

4/19 Touch-A-Truck
12:30–1:30 p.m. Children can see and touch heavy machinery and meet the people who build, protect and serve the community. Event features more than twenty vehicles, helicopter landings, moon bounce, hayride, and live music. Admission: $6; $20/foursome. Proceeds benefit the Junior League of Wilmington. Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Main Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-5131 or www.mayfairetown.com.

4/19 Literary Program
3 p.m. Poet, writer and UNC Creative Writing Department Chair Michael White with his book, *Travels in Vermeer: A Memoir*. Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

4/19 Music at First
5 p.m. Solo performance by local pianist Dominique Launey plus a four-handed composition with John Tabler. Free. First Presbyterian Church, 125 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-6688 or www.firstonthird.org.

4/19–29 Jewish Film Festival
7 p.m. (Monday & Wednesday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Six award-winning feature films and selected shorts that offer unique perspectives on Jewish identity, customs, rituals, history and contemporary global politics. See website for schedule. Admission: $7–15. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.wilmingtonjff.org.

4/20 Golf Tournament
10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Fundraising tournament with shotgun start at noon, hole-in-one car prize by Rippy Cadillac, awards ceremony and special guest speaker Jim Dodson. Admission: $150/golfer; $600/foursome. Proceeds benefit the Children's Museum of Wilmington. Cape Fear Country Club, 1518 Country Club Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-3534 or www.playwilmington.org.

4/20 Book Talk
7:30 p.m. Novelists Daniel Ray and Billy Beasley speak about their new books, both set in the Lower Cape Fear. Free. Federal Point History Center, 1121 A North lake Park Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-0502 or www.federalpointhistory.org.

4/21 Jarabe De Palo in Concert
8 p.m. Spanish rock. Admission: $28–40. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

4/23 Sea Turtle Info Session
6 p.m. The NC Coastal Reserve on its sea turtle nest monitoring program. Free. UNCW Center for Marine Science, 5600 Marvin K. Moss Lane, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-2324 or www.uncw.edu/cms.

3/24 Gallery Walk
6–9 p.m. Self-guided tours of galleries, art spaces and studios in Downtown Wilmington. Free. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

4/24 Making Legends Local Gala
6:30 p.m. (Reception); 8:30 p.m. (Show). Red carpet reception and stage show with local celebrities lip-synching '80s hits. Admission: $100; $35/show only. Proceeds benefit the Carousel Center. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or carouselcenter.org/gala.

4/24 Star Party
7–10:30 p.m. Join the Cape Fear Museum and Cape Fear Astronomy Society for a fun-filled evening of stargazing and astronomy activities. Bring your own flashlight. Free. Carolina Beach State Park, 1010 State Park Road, Carolina Beach. Info: www.capefearmuseum.com.

4/25 Walk for Autism
8 a.m. 5k, 1-mile run and kids' dash open to all. Admission: $25. Proceeds benefit the Autism Society of NC. Mayfaire Town Center, 925 Town Center Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.coastalncrunwalkforautism.com.

4/25 Combat Mud Run
8 a.m. 5k Mud Run plus Meat Head Mile Extension for serious competitors. Admission: $40–75. Proceeds benefit Step Up for Soldiers. National Guard Armory, 2412 Infantry Road, Wilmington. Info: its-go-time.com/combat-mud-run.

4/25 Work on Wilmington
8 a.m. – 12 p.m. Hundreds of volunteers connect with non-profit organizations across the region. Various locations in Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-2611 or www.workonwilmington.org.

4/25 Story Extravaganza
9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Celebrate storytelling with the whole family. NHC Northeast Regional Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6393 or www.nhclibrary.org.

4/25 Flytrap Frolic
9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Family-friendly event hosted by Coastal Land Trust to explore the region's native carnivorous plant. Free. Stanley Rehder Carnivorous Plant Garden, 3800 Canterbury Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 790-4524 or www.coastallandtrust.org/Flytrap.

4/25 Healthy Kids Day
9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. Outdoor family event to celebrate healthy lifestyles and active living. Free admission. Empie Park, 3405 Park Avenue. Info: (910) 341-4631 or www.wilmingtonhealthykids.com.

4/25 Cemetery Horticulture Tour
10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Horticulture tour with outdoor plant specialist Eelco Tinga and Superintendent Eric Kozen. Admission: $10. Oakdale Cemetery, 520 North Fifteenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-5682 or www.oakdalecemetery.org.

4/25 Earth Day Festival
12–6 p.m. Wilmington Earth Day Alliance event to encourage environmental awareness and protection of natural resources. Hugh MacRae Park, 314 Pine Grove Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtonearthday.com.

4/25 Relay for Life
12 p.m. – 12 a.m. Overnight community fundraising walk. Proceeds benefit the American Cancer Society. Ashley High School, 555 Halyburton Memorial Parkway, Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-4871 or main.acsevents.org.

4/25 Metropolitan Opera
12:30 p.m. Tragic twin bill includes *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci*. Admission: $20–24. Lumina Theater, UNCW, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195 or www.uncw.edu/lumina.

4/25 The Hot Sardines in Concert
7:30 p.m. Think wartime Paris via New Orleans. Admission: $20–36. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

4/25 Symphony Orchestra Concert
8 p.m. The Wilmington Symphony and UNCW's Opera Outreach Program present a fully-staged performance of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Admission: $6–27. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.wilmingtonsymphony.org.

4/25 & 26 Art Workshop
10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Saturday); 12–4 p.m. (Sunday). Silk scarves workshop with September Krueger. Admission: $110–125 plus $35 supply fee. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

4/25 & 26 Parade of Homes
12–5 p.m. Annual home tour presented by the Wilmington-Cape Fear Home Builders Association. Info: (910) 799-2611 or wilmingtonparadeofhomes.com.

4/26 Bird & Kayak Excursion
8–11:30 a.m. Join Wild Bird & Garden and local guide company Manhanaim Adventures for a morning of kayaking and birding on our local waters. Admission: $45. Wild Bird & Garden, 3500 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

4/26 Civil War Cruise
1 p.m. Three-hour cruise narrated by acclaimed historic author Dr. Chris Fonveille. Admission: $25–50. Wilmington Water Tours, 212 South Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 338-3134 or www.wilmingtonwatertours.net.

4/26 Sacred Harp Singers
1:30 p.m. (for beginners); 2–4 p.m. (entire group). A cappella social singing that dates back to Colonial America. Join the song. Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

4/26 Living History Program
3 p.m. *Lt. Flipper's Trial*, written and performed by Bob Rogers. Free. NHC Main Library, 201 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6301 or www.nhclibrary.org.

4/26 Youth Orchestra Concert
4 p.m. Family concert featuring the Wilmington Symphony Youth Orchestra along with the Wilmington Symphony Junior Strings and the Student Concerto Competition Junior Division winner. Free. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.wilmingtonsymphony.org.

4/26 Chamber Music Concert
7:30 p.m. Thomas Meglioranza performs songs from the American Songbook and music by Schubert and Strauss. Admission: $12–30. Church of the Servant, 4925 Oriole Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-1079 or www.chambermusicwilmington.org.

4/27 & 28 Youth Nature Program
10–11 a.m. Children ages 2–5 discover nature. Theme: "Animal Babies." Admission: $3. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/28 Alligator Workshop
9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Nature workshop led by educator Mike Campbell of the NC Wildlife Resource Commission. Includes field trip to Lake Waccamaw State Park. Admission: $10.

MEDITERRANEAN VEGGIE BREAKFAST WRAP

A refreshingly light tortilla wrap toasted with scrambled egg, feta cheese, roasted peppers and baby spinach.

PORT CITY JAVA

www.portcityjava.com | 17 Locations in Greater Wilmington

Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/29 Black River Nature Cruise
10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Miles of scenic wilderness narrated by coastal ecologist Andy Woods. Admission: $40–55. Battleship NC Dock, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-1611 or www.cfrboats.com.

4/29 Iration in Concert
5:30 p.m. Reggae-influenced alternative rockers Iration. Admission: $25–65. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-3614 or www.greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

4/29 Antiquity Dinner
7–10 p.m. Exclusive six-course dinner featuring wine pairings and cocktails with recipes from the 1850s. Admission: $100. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

4/29–5/2 Comedy Festival
Stand-up, sketch and improv performances by comedians from all over the U.S. and Canada. See website for complete schedule. Admission: $15–25. Various locations in Wilmington. Info: (910) 409-1262 or capefearcomedy.com.

4/30 Bird Lecture
6 p.m. Birds of the Reserve. Discover which birds use the Masonboro Inlet Reserve to nest and how to help protect them during the nesting season. Free. UNCW Center for Marine Science, 5600 Marvin K. Moss Lane, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-2324 or www.edu/cms.

4/30 Paula Poundstone Live
7:30 p.m. Comedian Paula Poundstone and her impromptu, observational humor. Thalian Hall. Admission: $18–40. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

4/30 NC Symphony Concert
7:30 p.m. Appalachian Spring. Admission: $30–80. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.ncsymphony.org.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday – Wednesday Cinematique
7 p.m. Independent, classic and foreign films screened in historic Thalian Hall. See website for schedule. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Tuesday Wine Tasting
6–8 p.m. Free wine tasting plus wine and small plate specials all night. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

Tuesday Cape Fear Blues Jam
8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday Farmers' Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Open-air market. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 US Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-9518 or www.poplargrove.org/farmers-market.

Wednesday T'ai Chi at CAM
12–1 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Wednesday Group Meditation
6:15–7:15 p.m. Energy clearing meditation led by Energy Healer Jennifer Chapis. 4/1: Wonder; 4/8: TBD; 4/15: Anti-aging; 4/22: Commitment; 4/29: Adventure. Suggested donation: $15. McKay Healing Arts, 4916 Wrightsville Avenue, Wilmington. Info: (949) 547-4402 or www.allovehealing.com.

Thursday Yoga at the CAM
12–1 p.m. All levels welcome. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday & Saturday Dinner Theatre
7 p.m. Comedic etiquette dinner show featuring Still Bitchin': Rude Bitches Make Me Tired 2 by Celia Rivenbark, adapted by Zach Hanner. Admission: $18–28. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Saturday Riverfront Farmers' Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market with live music. Market closed weekend of the Azalea Festival. Free admission. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowtown.com/events/farmers-market.

Saturday Port City Playwrights
11 a.m. Local playwrights and screenwriters meet. McAlister's Deli, 740 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: portcityplaywright.wix.com/pcpp.

Saturday Super Saturday Fun Time
3 p.m. Live theater and variety show. Tickets: $8. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Sunday Group Meditation
10–11 a.m. Energy clearing meditation led by Energy Healer Jennifer Chapis. 4/5: Carefree Youthfulness; 4/19: Optimal Health; 4/26: Freedom. Suggested donation: $15. Exhale Yoga & Wellness Studio, 16 South Front Street, Wilmington (enter in alley). Info: (949) 547-4402 or www.allovehealing.com.

To add a calendar event, please contact Ashley at ashley@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

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N.C. WRITER'S Notebook

By Sandra Redding

April 1. This is the day upon which we are reminded of what we are on the other three-hundred and sixty-four days. — Mark Twain

Literary Events

April 13–16 (Monday–Thursday). Spring Literary Festival, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee. This four-day series features an impressive potpourri of national and state authors (free). Info: litfestival.org

April 24–26 (Friday–Sunday). Blue Ridge Bookfest, Blue Ridge Community College, Flat Rock. Featured presenter, Joseph Galloway, one of America's premier war and foreign correspondents, plus dozens of workshops and signings by N.C. writers. Info: blueridge.edu/blueridgebookfest

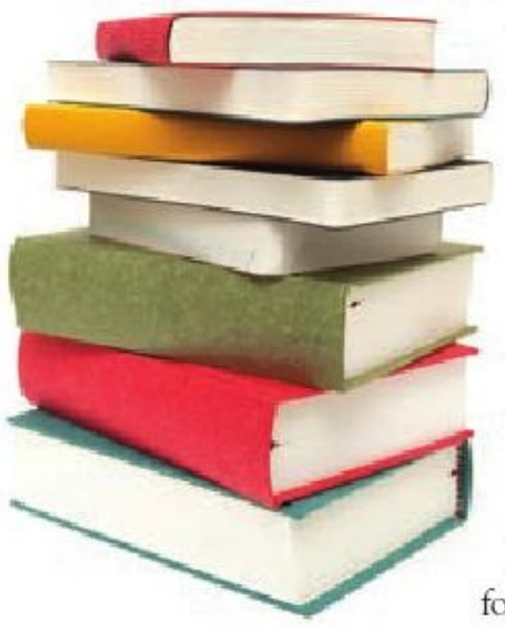
April 25 (Saturday, 9 a.m.). A day-long series of poetry workshops sponsored by Press 53 and Jacar Press. Historic Brookstown Inn, Winston-Salem. Have lunch with Poet Laureate Shelby Stephenson. Optional Sunday workshop led by Rebecca Foust, 2015 Press 53 Award winner. Registration: www.press53.com/gatheringofpoets.html

April 25 (Saturday, 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.). Annual Haiku Holiday Conference, Bolen Brooks Farm, Chapel Hill. All haiku writers and readers are invited to this free event. Morning presenters: Charlotte Digregorio and Terri Finch; afternoon workshop led by Lenard Moore, chairman of the society. Info: nc-haiku.org/haiku-holiday

I think I would have written more books if I'd had fewer kids . . . but I think the books in general would have had a little less spark in them. — Clyde Edgerton

Book Store Updates

The staff of The Country Bookshop keeps customers happy by locally hand-picking an eclectic selection of books. Historical novelist Anne Barnhill says this cozy shop is one of her favorite places. "The staff is always courteous, knowledgeable and enthusiastic," she says. "I love promoting my books in Southern Pines." Info: www.thecountrybookshop.biz



In February, Pomegranate Books of Wilmington celebrated the opening of Café Zola, a coffee and tea shop, inside the store. Specializing in books by local authors, Pomegranate hosts readings, children's events, lectures and book clubs. If you attend Wilmington's Azalea Festival on April 11, stop by for book browsing and a cup of tea. Info: pombooks.net

In January, Scuppernong Books celebrated its first year in Greensboro. Book lovers flock to this popular downtown spot for books, camaraderie, coffee, tea, beer, wine and, perhaps, the busiest event schedule in the state. In addition to readings with national and local authors, the store hosts everything from a French conversation group to Zen meditation. Info: Scuppernongbooks.com

Mary Jo Buckl recently became new owner of The Next Chapter Bookstore in historic New Bern. The shop is still packed with gently used and new books autographed by local authors. The scenic view is a must-see for those visiting the coast. Info: thenextchapternc.com

Just Out

C. Michael Briggs' *Guilford Under the Stars and Bars* ($44.95) is a comprehensive, 300-page record of the Civil War in Guilford County. It is loaded with historical documents and events, photos and illustrations, driving tours, a list of Guilford soldiers who died in the war and an entire chapter on the long rifles made in Guilford before and during the war. And don't miss the chapter on "Where is the Confederate gold buried?" Available at 3705-B West Market Street, Greensboro, or call (336) 274-4758.

"When my daughter disappeared, the town gathered to search the frozen river," begins one of Ansel Elkins' poems in her newly published *Blue Yodel* (Yale University Press, $18 paperback.) "The Reformatory for misbehaving girls/ keeps its young vixens walled in," begins another. You may remember Elkins' name from a snarky *New Yorker* article about how the Greensboro poet spent three weeks writing poetry in a sleek New York hotel. Once you read her poetry, you're unlikely to remember her for anything else.

A Chinese poet many years ago noticed that to re-create something in words is like being alive twice. — Frances Mayes

Writing Lesson

In 2003, Fred Chappell, then poet laureate, suggested selecting master poets to mentor promising student and adult poets. Marie Gilbert, former president of the North Carolina Poetry Society (NCPS), volunteered to personally fund the project. The generosity of those two Greensboro poets resulted in the creation of the Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poetry Series. This project, administered by NCPS, annually appoints three stellar N. C. poets to critique the poetry of and arrange readings for at least two students and one adult poet.

Greensboro's Rosalyn Marhatta, a 2014 adult mentee, says she became much more confident after being mentored by Lynn Veach Sadler. "My task was to complete twelve pages of poetry in four months," Marhatta says. "An overachiever, I wrote more. My mentor encouraged me to send poems out. If rejected, I was to send them to another publication the next day." Over sixty-two people attended a reading at Greensboro Public Library. "I was so thrilled to see Kevin Watson and Fred Chappell in the audience," Marhatta says, "so thrilled I forgot to take a picture with Mr. Chappell."

Read a poem. Write a poem. Give a poem to someone you love. And do keep me posted on writerly happenings: sanredd@earthlink.net

Greensboro writer Sandra Redding's novel, Naomi Wise: A Cautionary Tale, *is a riveting story about heartbreak and hope in a Quaker community.*

Port City People

Azalea Festival Spring Soiree
Riverside Hilton Wilmington
Friday, March 6, 2015
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Meghan Mathews, Hunter Crumpton, Candace Wellborn, Julie Sanders

Hal & Dawn Smith

Eric & Katie Seidel

Deb Bond and Paul Power

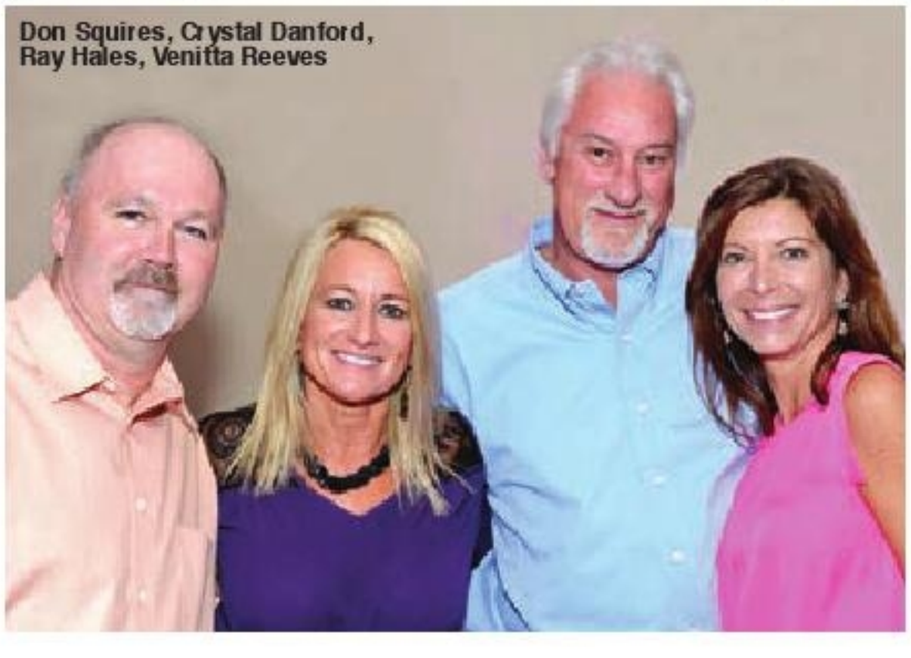
Erin & Andy Collins

Tom & Diane Wolk, Robby & Liz Carroll

Dr. Ron Dye and Fern Bugg

Lora Hampton and Scott Girdwood

Vicky & Tom Green, Jim & Lynn Kornegay, Bob Freedman


Don Squires, Crystal Danford, Ray Hales, Venitta Reeves

Samantha Stokes, Cristy Woodrum, Lindsey Roberson

Port City People

5th Annual UNCW Alpha Phi Red Dress Gala

The Terraces on Sir Tyler

Saturday, February 28, 2015

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Sonya and Devin Paulus

Lexi Schimelfenig, Courtney Thaxton, Casey Croom

Charlotte Kornegay and Nicolette Benderoth

Corine Lawier and Beth Rusterholz

Jordan Slaughter, Morgan Story, Marsha & Terry Story

Jenna Swink and Nicolette Labrijn

Courtney, Kimberly, and Caroline Thaxton

Michaela Davis, Rachael Krizanek, Caroline Radcliff

Bruce, Sarah, and Kim McKee

Pamela Federline, Caroline Fagala, Tara Johnson, Kendall Jedrey, Michelle De Carlo, Diana Pavel

Casey Croom and Chelsea Diedrich

Port City People

Cape Fear "Daisy" Heart Ball

Saturday, February 14, 2015

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Elle & Dr. Jonathan Woods

Jim & Beth Quinn, Jimmy Hopkins

Jon & Sheila Evans

Melanie & John Welsh

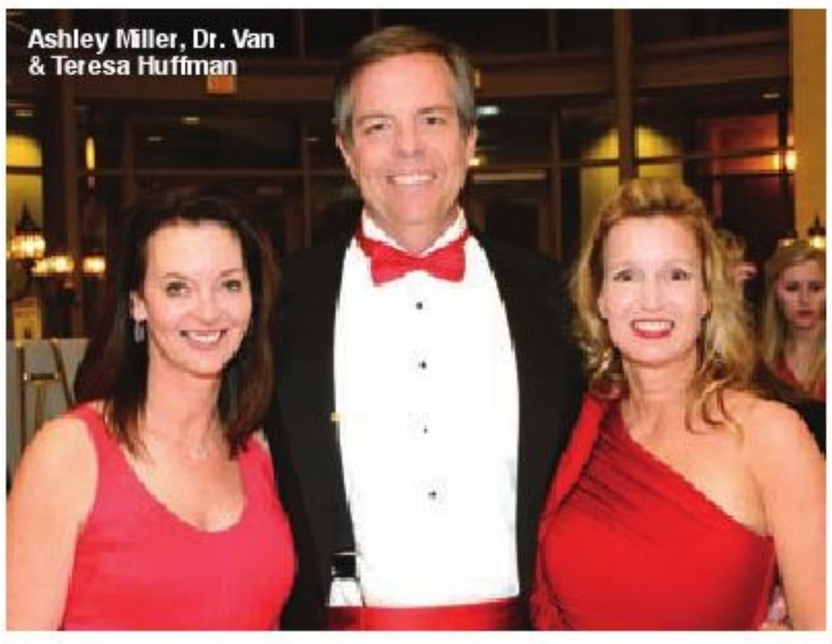
Matthew Phillips, Lindsey Conners, Alexis Wall, Ed & Dr. Rosalyn George

Dr. James & Robin Harper

Donl & Ann Downing

Sharon Laney, Dana Fisher, Melissa Gatt, Kathy Gresham

Pat & Walter Kusek


Ashley Miller, Dr. Van & Teresa Huffman

Mrs. and Dr. Damian Brezinski, Dr. Laura Harris

Cathy Leena and Kirk Lohrli

Port City People

Masked Mardi Gras Party

Bellamy Mansion

Tuesday, February 17, 2015

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Dan & Rosemary Fisette

Bobbie & Paul DiFilippio

Carly & Jason Forman

Dianna Kraus-Anderson and Taylor Anderson

Lara Landgraf and Caroline Cropp

Wade Totti, Lee and Ken Giaimo, Bill Petry

Jennifer Elgart and Melissa Ellison

Matt & Susan Dunne

Dotty Waters and Edwin Robertson

Aaron and Yulia Blankenship

Dave Filios, Janet Peiler

Matt Jordan, Anthony Cunnings, Tracy Zabenko, Chris Lopata

Port City People

Cape Fear Literacy Council's 30th Annual Gala
"The Mad Hatter's Tea Party"
Saturday, March 7, 2015
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Max Hilkey, Madeline Podesta, Charles MacIntire

Bryan & Nina Bays Cournoyer

Nancy Woolley

Robert Tomkinson

Jim & Dru Hogey

Amanda & Trip Coyne, Shannon Crai

Nancy Buckingham

Steve & Janis Netherland

TJ Dunn, Whitney Cook, Shannon Craine

Anna Withers and Tamara Fosdick

Ed Fore and Janice McSween

Jenna Davis, Chris Gore, Matt Tenhuisen, Leigh Johnson, Alex Mercer

A Little Wonderment

What April fool doesn't need that?

By Astrid Stellanova

When you've got April Fools', Easter, Earth and Tax Days all on the calendar, it can be a challenge to stay upright, Star Children. But then, Mother Nature gave us springtime, duckies and daisies in April, too, just to compensate with a little wonderment. A shout out to those born under the sign of the Ram – Pharrell Williams, Robert Downey Jr., and Susan Boyle, for starters – proving you can't go around generalizing about this sign. Huzzah to the most expressive eyebrows in the world, sported by that sexy Aries goat, Jack Nicholson. Oh, that's right. Jack's a Taurus, which means it would never work out. But he's still my celebrity crush.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
You're usually a take-no-prisoners kind of person, but this month you find yourself more laid back at last. A good thing, Darling. Why, you ask? Because you were just one John Deere away from thinking you owned the whole farm when you only bought one goat. The fault, dear Ram, lies in Aries' stars – and big mouth. We are coming up on another Mercury in retrograde next month, which is going to leave everybody, even you, a little whack-a-doodle. So just make the most of your birthday, and if you have to sign anything, or commit to anything, do it sooner than later. You don't like to avoid decisions, but you should next month. Learn the lyrics to Pharrell's "Happy" song – because it would make a good anthem for the unsinkable Rams I know and love should you fall off the boat.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
Life frustrations are finally going to let up and give you some peace. Recently, there has been a long string of crap-ola and uh-ohs to weather. Given your feisty temperament, you have really been on slow boil and about to bust wide open. Go let loose and have some fun. Get your mind off things. Let off some steam, and reset your attitude. If you don't, life will be the same damned thing all over again . . . and it doesn't have to be, Sweetheart. The number 9 is lucky for you right now, and you'll notice it popping up.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
If only the world would do things your way, right? Nooooo, it ain't necessarily so. Sugar, you can't call the square dance when you don't even know the two-step. It's time you stop trying to direct the universe and realize you're in this big old astral schoolhouse with everybody else. We are all here to learn. If you feel pain, maybe it's because your nose is stuck/wedged in somebody else's business. (Another tip you might actually like: Somebody has a massive crush on you.)

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
You've had a correction in your life that must have been a huge relief; whatever it was, it frees you to move on. Now, you are able to pursue something that has been on your bucket list forever. You can try ice fishing, train a service dog, or learn sign language – or just take a sexy someone out for a five-course supper. Just don't try to renege on a favor you promised someone close to you, because they are counting on it.

Leo (July 23–August 22)
It don't much matter if you are a male or female; you have been pissy and on the outs with most of the womenfolk in your life. Take care of business – own whatever it is that happened, even if you still insist you didn't do it – and restore order in the house. Would you rather be right, or be happy? Outside the house, things look great. You score Godiva for Hershey prices this month – investments and money matters are going right for lucky ole you.

Virgo (August 23–September 22)
There's a fatalistic streak in you that sometimes thinks you don't deserve good fortune when you find it. Honey, put on some Coltrane or Pharrell and purge that nonsense. Come the middle of the month you get a visit from somebody you forgot about who has always cared for you. They will bring you good news, and even a little good fortune, which you most assuredly do deserve. Someone never forgot a favor you did long ago, and they kindly repay it.

Libra (September 23–October 22)
That medium in the road (Grandpa Hornblower never exactly understood the word "median") may be directing you to some excellent destiny. And the medium may not have a crystal ball, or even look like a Swami, or know hand signals. That's the beauty of life; help comes from unexpected sources this month. And take time to look up at the stars; there's more than one astral event this month that will definitely have destiny-changing capacity for your future.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
You had a very serious scare, and a too-close-for-comfort call in the past weeks. It ain't over just yet, Sugar. Here's what Astrid would recommend. Pay closer attention. Know where you are putting your feet before you step in a very large pile of hoo-hoo and mess up them (very expensive) designer shoes. You have got to think about feeling good, staying well, and not just about looking good. Meanwhile, a seemingly inconsequential mistake is resolved in your favor. It will turn out to be bigger than you knew.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
When my Daddy had his unfortunate incarceration in Birmingham, he asked to serve his time working in the kitchen because he loved to eat. This is kind of like your predicament this month: You get a lot more of what you will discover you might not necessarily like. Sorta like my Daddy having unlimited access to bad prison food. Here's the best advice to navigate these waters: Be explicit; express your inner wishes clearly, because the universe could throw you a curve ball just for laughs.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
You lost something lately that really mattered to you. Maybe you don't even realize it yet. But when you do, I suspect you will be in a tizzy. Astrid advises you to remember what Grandpa taught me. Fear is just False Evidence Appearing Real. It will come back. Meanwhile, read every important paper very closely. Do not sign or commit to do anything without caution and good advice. Stay cool, Sweet Thing.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
There's a brown Buick in your garage that you would desperately like to transform into a red Ferrari. Just through wishful thinking. Honey, you are just like my Beau. He spends a lot of time wishing and hoping, with his rump in his old rump-sprung recliner. A red Ferrari-size dream is going to require some action on your part. Put a little English on that ball and get in the game, because if you rack 'em up, you will win 'em.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
Somebody wronged you, it is true, and you have begun a grudge match. There ain't no winning, Sweetheart. Even if you win, when it comes to revenge, you lose. Smile sweetly and go about your business. And don't eat your anger, or you will wind up like Astrid – my sugar has just soared, Honey, since I discovered dark chocolate as the bandage for all wounds. Your luck is going to transform, but it will require you to pay attention and respond.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

Perfectly Civilized

Up there in the hills, folks know how to conduct business with a personal touch

By Clyde Edgerton

It's good to head to the mountains, and the native folks up that way may sometimes seem a little bit uncivilized . . . in the best of ways. People who may seem to be naïve can simply be honest, trusting and clear-headed.

A few years ago, my wife, Kristina, and I were visiting Ashe County, North Carolina, up in the very northwest corner of the state. The beauty and quiet of the New River and the Ashe County landscape near West Jefferson (thirty minutes north of Boone) struck us both. We asked then-stranger Bill Hutchins (we met him at a literary reading) if he knew of any cabin rental possibilities.

"I'm about to go to France for a year," Bill said, "and I have a cabin that will be available for the entire time. You'd be responsible for electricity, phone, and getting the grass cut once in a while. That's it. I'm not charging rent."

"A year?"

"That's right. Do you want to see it?"

I looked at Kristina; she looked at me.

"You wouldn't have to come up over three or four times," Bill said, "unless you wanted to. I've got somebody who cuts the grass. You can pay him when you're up here and you can call in to the electric company and phone company and change things over from my name to yours. It shouldn't be expensive at all."

We told him we'd call him in a couple of days. Privately we worried that something was amiss. We asked Bill to send some photos by email, saw the place, visited it, loved it — what a deal! — and said yes, we'll take it.

A few months later, we find ourselves in Bill's little cabin on Willie Walker Road. I'm talking on the phone to a person I won't name (she could get in trouble, as you will see). She's from the Blue Ridge Electric Company. I give her my home address, phone number, Social Security number, credit card number — so I can take over the bill. She is very friendly and we have a nice chat about this and that, and I'm about to hang up when she says, "Listen, would you do a little something for me?"

"Sure," I say.

"Would you go outside, around to the side of the house, and write down the meter reading up there and give it to me so we don't have to send up a truck — save us a little money?"

"Well . . . sure, by all means."

I walk out, kind of astonished, write down the meter reading, come back inside, and read it to her. She thanks me and that is that. Whenever I'm trying to explain the people-environment of Ashe County, I tell about what I was asked to do by an employee of the electric company.

Well, heck. Her name was Polly. Thank you, Polly. I don't think you'll get in trouble in Ashe County. I'm confident of that. Or maybe I'm naïve. But I'm thinking Ashe County folks will refuse to allow company policy to trump common sense. At least the Ashe County folks I've met.

Clyde Edgerton is the author of ten novels, a memoir and a new work, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY BLAIR

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